

# Notice of Meeting

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## Schools Forum

**Monday 17th June 2024 at 5.00pm**  
Via Zoom

The meeting can be watched live here: [www.westberks.gov.uk/schoolsforumlive](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/schoolsforumlive)

Date of despatch of Agenda: Tuesday, 11 June 2024

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Jessica Bailiss on (01635) 503124  
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Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)



## **Agenda - Schools Forum to be held on Monday, 17 June 2024 (continued)**

**Forum Members:** Reverend Mark Bennet, Nicolle Browning, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Paul Davey, Jacque Davies, Richard Hand, Michelle Harrison, Keith Harvey, Richard Hawthorne, Jon Hewitt, Trevor Keable, Jo Lagares, Julie Lewry, Jo MacArthur, Maria Morgan, Jamie Morton, Gemma Piper, Chris Prosser, David Ramsden, Lesley Roberts, Campbell Smith, Graham Spellman, Phil Spray and Charlotte Wilson

# **Agenda**

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Sarah Clarke  
Service Director: Strategy and Governance

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Stephen Chard on telephone (01635) 519462.

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**Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee**

## **SCHOOLS FORUM**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 11 MARCH 2024**

**Present:** Reverend Mark Bennet (Church of England Diocese), Councillor Heather Codling (Executive Portfolio Holder: Children, Education and Young People's Services), Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Corporate Services), Paul Davey (Maintained Primary School Governor), Jacquie Davies (Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher), Richard Hand (Trade Union), Keith Harvey (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Trevor Keable (Academy School Governor), Jo Lagares (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Maria Morgan (Maintained Nursery School Headteacher), Gemma Piper (Academy School Headteacher), Lesley Roberts (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Graham Spellman (Roman Catholic Diocese) and Lindsay Wood (Academy School Headteacher)

**Also Present:** Avril Allenby (Early Years Service Manager), Rose Carberry (Principal Adviser for School Improvement), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director - Children and Family Services), Melanie Ellis (Acting Head of Finance and Property), Nicola Ponton (SEN Manager), Jane Seymour (Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Team) and Jessica Bailiss (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Nicolle Browning (Academy School Headteacher), Michelle Harrison ((Maintained Primary School SBM), Jon Hewitt (Maintained Special School Headteacher), Chris Prosser (Maintained Secondary School Headteacher), David Ramsden (Maintained Secondary School Headteacher), Campbell Smith (Academy School Governor), Phil Spray (Maintained Primary School Governor) and Charlotte Wilson (Academy School Headteacher)

#### **PART I**

**1      Minutes of previous meetings date 19th December 2023 and 22nd January 2024**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 were approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chair.

**2      Actions arising from previous meetings**

All actions were in hand or completed.

**3      Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**4      Membership**

Jess Bailiss provided the following membership updates:

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- Following an election for a maintained primary governor, Jay Armstrong, who was a Governor at Hungerford Primary School, had joined the Forum.
- An academy governor election was also held but no nominations were submitted so this would be repeated at a later stage.
- Primary Headteachers had been consulted to seek a new representative for the Forum. Hopefully this position would be filled in time for the next round of meetings in June 2024.
- The Early Years Funding Group had sought nominations for a Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years representative to join the Forum however no nominations had come forward. This would be raised again at the next meeting.
- No Forum members were approaching the end of their term of office at the present time.

### 5 Work Programme 2024/25 (Jessica Bailiss)

The Chair drew attention to the work programme on page 17 and asked if Forum members had any questions.

Reverend Mark Bennett commented that the High Needs Block (HNB) was currently facing challenges and queried if the proposed work programme would be sufficient in tackling the issues faced. Rose Carberry reported that six additional meetings of the Heads' Funding Group (HFG) had been scheduled to focus in detail on the area of high needs and it was expected that this should be sufficient.

It was proposed and seconded that the work programme for 2024/25 be approved. The Chair invited the Forum to vote on the proposal and at the vote the motion was approved.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools' Forum approved the work programme for 2024/25.

### 6 Final High Needs Block Budget 2024/25 (Jane Seymour)

Jane Seymour introduced the report (Agenda Item 7) that sought approval for the proposed 2024-25 High Needs Block (HNB) deficit budget and for a decision to be reached on how the Schools' Block transfer of 0.25 percent in 2024/25 should be used.

Jane Seymour reported that the HNB had been an area of challenge for some time and the range of reasons for this were set out in the report. The table under section 4.1 of the report showed that there had been an increase in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in West Berkshire by 58 percent between 2019 and 2024. The pressure for additional EHCPs had been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. The pandemic had also exacerbated a pre-existing issue with rising incidence of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

Jane Seymour drew attention to section 4.4 of the report, which set out the deficit budgets set for the HNB over the last eight years. This was an issue being faced nationally. Jane Seymour reported that, as a result, 55 Local Authorities (LAs) had been placed in the Government's Delivering Better Value Programme (DBVP) and 20 LAs with the highest level of overspend were now part of the Government's Safety Valve Programme (SVP). West Berkshire was in tranche three of the DBVP.

Jane Seymour explained that the criteria for EHCPs was applied robustly in West Berkshire however increases were still being seen. The creation of more local provision for children with SEMH and autism had alleviated some pressures, as local maintained provision was more cost effective than independent and non-maintained provision. Further detail on this was included in section 4.7 of the report.

Section 4.10 of the report summarised the current position. In summary, the total net shortfall in the 2024-25 HNB budget was £17,784,394. This included a predicted 2023/24 overspend of £4,793,622 and carried forward overspends of £5,070,384 from previous

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years, totalling £9,864,006 in overspends. Without the carried forward overspends, the shortfall in 24-25 would be £7,920,388.

Section 4.12 of the report set out the areas that cost increases in the estimated budget requirement for 2024-25 related to. The most significant increase related to independent and non-maintained school placements. Details of the services paid for from the high needs budget and the corresponding budget information was set out in Appendix A of the report.

Jane Seymour drew attention to section five of the report, which detailed the impact of the DBVP in West Berkshire and how it sought to move the area to a more sustainable position.

To conclude, Jane Seymour highlighted the proposals set out in section seven of the report, which included a recommendation to agree the deficit budget, whilst work continued to reduce costs through the DBVP and work carried out by the Heads' Funding Group (HFG) on non-statutory spend at its additional meetings.

Gemma Piper referred to the additional meetings of the HFG and commented that the first meeting had provided some context however, what actually needed to be achieved still needed to be set out. In terms of approving the HNB Budget, Gemma Piper commented that it had been clear at the last meeting of the HFG that approving the HNB Budget at the current stage felt like an arbitrary process, because the budget proposed did not include the savings that would need to be realised over the next year. Gemma Piper queried the process going forward in terms of how saving proposals formed by the HFG would feed into the Schools' Forum. It was confirmed by Officers that any proposals formed at additional meetings of the HFG would need to then go to the Forum to be considered. Gemma Piper noted that the key meeting dates were the gateway to change and it would be helpful to have this mapped out ready for the next additional HFG meeting.

Gemma Piper reported that at the HFG the point had been raised about monitoring other LAs that were also in DBV and SVP and this had been added as an ongoing action. Gemma Piper requested that this also be added as an ongoing action for the Schools' Forum to be reported on at each meeting. Rose Carberry reported that an updated DBV presentation, including the information requested by heads, would be provided in time for the next additional HFG meeting.

Trevor Keable voiced concern that no information had come forward yet from the additional HFG meetings to the Forum regarding what was proposed. He was concerned that Forum members were not being kept informed. The Chair suggested that a special meeting of the Schools' Forum was likely required.

Trevor Keable queried what the implications were if the proposed HNB budget set out in the report was not approved.

Trevor Keable referred to the current steer being taken by the Department for Education (DfE) and that schools were becoming increasingly difficult to manage. Staff in schools were exhausted due to having to care for children when the LA had needed to withdraw some support. Situations were occurring where pupils required further support than what could be offered in mainstream schools and this was making it particularly stressful for staff. The Forum needed to understand how to work with the LA and schools given the real issues being faced.

Keith Harvey noted the increase in EHCPs in West Berkshire of 36 percent between 2019 and 2023, whilst the increase in funding was only 30 percent. In his view, this immediately showed where the deficit was coming from. Keith Harvey asked West Berkshire Councillors if there was anything they could do to lobby the Government on the

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matter. He was concerned that even with the mitigations proposed as part of DBVP, the deficit was still going to increase.

Councillor Iain Cottingham referred to the guidance coming from the DfE. The £17m deficit was 10 percent of the LAs revenue budget for 2024/25 and was a huge amount of money. He referred to the Government's budget announcement and that Departments were receiving cuts in real terms to fund tax cuts. It was noted that if there was a change in Government it was unlikely that new funding would come forward for LAs. Councillor Cottingham reported that it was recognised that the system was broken and he had stated as part of his budget speech for the LA that the Government needed to get a grip on adult and children social care funding where costs and demand were rising.

Keith Harvey queried if Councillor Cottingham was in touch with the local Members of Parliament who could potentially lobby the Government. Councillor Cottingham was not confident about the impact lobbying would have however, he and Councillor Heather Codling agreed to lobby local MPs on the matter.

Gemma Piper commented that the additional HFG was due to meet for a second time and it was hoped that at this meeting it would become clear what needed to be saved by when. No proposals had yet been formed however, Officers had gone away from the last meeting to carry out the necessary work in time for the next scheduled meeting and heads were keen to understand what needed to be achieved and what levers were available to help pull back spend. Gemma Piper stated that there was an envelope that they needed to work within and felt lobbying should be taking place and the reality should be shared. Gemma Piper felt that all members of the Forum should individually lobby the local MP, whilst offering to children within communities the very best they could offer, which was currently within an envelope that there was little control over.

Keith Harvey stated that he had sent a letter via his local MP to the Secretary of State and he had received a response, which had provided little information. Councillor Cottingham agreed they needed to do as much as possible with a collective voice. Rose Carberry agreed that there was a risk that if issues were not raised it would be assumed everything was fine.

Rose Carberry explained that the private meeting with Forum members had been cancelled because at that point discussions regarding what needed to be achieved were no further forward. Detail would shortly be provided to the HFG and it was proposed that an action be taken away to set up an extraordinary Schools' Forum meeting prior to the next scheduled meeting in June, to ensure members were up to date.

Paul Davey referred to a point he had raised at the last Forum meeting regarding a lack of clarity concerning what levers were available and what information would be available to Forum members in order to be able to understand what could be done. Paul Davey noted that this information had not yet been brought to the Forum however, now understood this was because it was shortly to be shared with the HFG. Paul Davey felt that following the next additional HFG, the information would need to be shared with the Forum fairly quickly so they were all working from the same page. He was conscious that it was a large amount of money that needed to be recouped and he was conscious they were still in the hopeful stage rather than the planning and organisation stage.

Rose Carberry reported that there was a process in place to facilitate robust discussions. The background work was currently being undertaken and when a position was reached where there was clarity around what could realistically be saved, it would be brought to the Forum for consideration. It was noted that there were savings in relation to DBVP being viewed at the same time as wider savings.

Reverend Mark Bennet referred to use of language used in terms of being robust in the evaluation of EHCPs and what this did in terms of relationships with parents. Every



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EHCP that a parent had to fight for through an appeal was a lost relationship with a parent and someone who felt distanced from the system. It represented a huge amount of energy that had been placed into something other than educating their child. Reverend Bennet stressed that the partnership with parents was really important and although criteria needed to be applied robustly it also needed to be applied fairly. He was concerned that parents with less resource to fight through the system were put at a disadvantage. It was felt that the system might need rebalancing to maintain positive relationships with parents.

In response to Reverend Bennet's comments, Jane Seymour voiced that relationships with parents were really important and clarified that those attending the Panel did not resent having to make an EHCP. The reason why the area was so overspent was because need was being met where it was identified. An EHCP could not be refused on the ground of the budget. It was also important to be clear that because there was only an 'envelope' available it was not possible to give out everything that was requested and there were controls within the system. Jane Seymour apologised for the use of the word 'robust' and clarified that this had only been used to demonstrate that these controls were in place. Jane Seymour expressed that whilst Officers were very aware of the envelope they needed to work within, the most important aim was to meet the needs of children.

Richard Hand referred to the relaunched website called [School Cuts](#), which was a useful tool for schools. Richard Hand reported that concerningly the message from the DfE was that schools were adequately funded, and teaching and education staff were well rewarded. The NEU was currently carrying out an electronic indicative ballot with its members for strike action. This would not go to a full postal ballot unless the threshold of 60 percent was reached. The national picture was currently 28 percent voting and West Berkshire was at about 24 percent. Richard Hand reported that there was fatigue amongst staff members and the worry was that the threshold would not be reached, indicating there was not an issue. The primary focus for the strike action was school funding rather than solely about pay. Richard Hand suggested that members of the Forum remind their staff to vote if possible. Voting was extremely important otherwise there would be little leverage with any Government in place.

In terms of savings, Richard Hand felt that good will needed to be demonstrated. It was unlikely the deficit would be offset completely, so it was about how much could be achieved and what would be enough for the DfE to accept.

Richard Hand referred to the rise in EHCPs and commented that there was an issue in that the areas was unregulated. There needed to be reform of EHCPs and the providers.

Lesley Roberts agreed that lobbying needed to take place to avoid the Government thinking everything was ok. The NAHT were very good at collecting information from headteachers. Lesley Roberts reported that due to the location of her school she had the disparity of three LAs, which all operated very differently in terms of funding and how easy it was to access. If lobbying did not happen then it was difficult to justify complaining about the situation. Lesley Roberts referred to the agreed 0.25 percent transfer of funding and was concerned about this not making a difference when schools would be left with fewer services but the same number of children. Lesley Roberts commented on the negativity of the meetings taking place and asked for assurance that additional meetings would make a difference. It was felt that working with the local MP and unions would support the process.

Reverend Bennett queried if it would be worth inviting the MP Laura Farris or other candidates with the election on the horizon to meetings of the Forum, so that Forum members could express to them their concerns on the state of the education service. It was noted that there was more than one MP for the district.

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The Chair asked Jess Bailiss to look into whether local MPs could be invited to attend meetings of the Schools' Forum, as it was felt that there was a great need to communicate to the people in power how the Forum felt. Jess Bailiss agreed to check the Schools' Forum regulations however, was aware that there were very strict rules regarding who was permitted to speak at meetings of the Forum.

The Chair asked if LAs communicated with each other about the situation faced. Jane Seymour reported that there was an active South East SEND Leads Regional Group, and information was shared at this group about DBV and SVP. Information on local areas' HNB budgets was available publicly through information shared as part of meetings of Schools' Forums. Jane Seymour confirmed that the DfE also attended the SEND Leads Regional meetings however, they were often not very open to narrative about there not being enough money in the system and were of the view that money was not being spent appropriately, despite rising demand and open ended statutory duties.

Councillor Cottingham referred to comments about staff morale and turnover due to increasing pressure. He felt it would be helpful to know what the turnover rate was and details of how long members of staff had been employed and the reasons for them leaving. He queried if this information was something that could be coordinated and consolidated as this could help form a case for lobbying the Government.

Gemma Piper reported that this information was available in different forms publicly and she was keen to protect the workload of headteachers and avoid further data collection. Gemma Piper provided some data from the School Teachers Review body (STRB) which demonstrated under met targets on teacher recruitment nationally. Councillor Cottingham queried how West Berkshire compared to these figures and it was voiced that there had always been an issue with recruitment in West Berkshire and this had been exacerbated by the rise in the cost of living. Richard Hand reported that issues faced nationally were raised with the Children's Secretary of State continuously however, were not listened to.

Gemma Piper queried what the implications would be if the HNB Budget was not agreed by the Forum. Melanie Ellis reported that this issue had also been raised at the recent HFG meeting and it had been set out that the budget could be set as a starting point and the additional HFG meetings would then look at ways to save money over the longer term, some of which might be achieved in year but the majority would likely be afterwards.

Rose Carberry commented that they had to provide for children in the district and this requirement had resulted in the large deficit. Statutory duties had to be delivered and alongside this there was a large amount of extra work taking place. It would be a much worse situation if a decision was required on the budget without this mitigation in place however, the difficulty of the situation was acknowledged.

Councillor Cottingham recognised that to not approve the HNB budget would send a message to the government that not enough funding had been set aside for high needs. A budget was a representation of what the strategic plan was and Jane Seymour had detailed a number of children that the HNB budget would support. He queried if the demand was going to be greater than what was proposed in the budget in 2024/25.

Paul Davey added that there was also not sufficient clarity on what levers were available to make savings and what the negative impact would be of these levers on those receiving the benefit of services. He was concerned that the Forum was being asked to make a decision when there was no clarity regarding what the impact would be.

Councillor Codling was concerned that if the budget was not agreed, the message sent would be a negative one and this could result in West Berkshire being placed in the SVP. If this happened control would be largely removed. Councillor Codling felt that currently

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effort could be demonstrated in working together to solve the issues faced. The DBVP was about to start and she felt it would be a mistake to not approve the budget.

Keith Harvey commented that the HFG had recommended that the Schools' Forum approve the budget with the caveat that the end point would change. Keith Harvey concurred with Councillor Codling that the budget needed to be approved. Councillor Codling agreed that the end figures would be different by the end of 2024/25 however, it was important to make a start and try to work together.

Gemma Piper agreed that the figures would be different at the end of 2024/25 due to the change in need, but also because the HFG/Forum were going to actively try to reduce the deficit through the body of work carried out at the additional meetings. Gemma Piper stated that it was important to voice publicly that whilst the Forum might be willing to approve the budget, there was a caveat that the additional work would take place alongside this that recognised that the cost of services needed to be reduced and savings needed to be delivered where possible.

Jane Seymour concurred that not agreeing the budget would send an unhelpful message to the DfE and would put the LA at greater risk of being placed on the SVP. From the great deal of detailed work that had taken place so far it was known that the proposed budget would meet the identified statutory needs, including those that were predicted. Jane Seymour explained that making a decision on the current budget was not a decision that would cause damage to children. The additional meetings would look at what could be reduced whilst minimising damage. The recommendation would be formed collectively by the HFG and would need to be approved by the Forum.

Keith Harvey queried if there were any examples of LAs where the SVP had improved the situation for children. Jane Seymour confirmed that she did not yet have enough information to be able to answer the question. Jane Seymour reported that she did know that LAs in the SVP were awarded funding to help settle their deficit however, this was with tight expectations, which in some cases had been deemed unrealistic. Gemma Piper reiterated the importance of having information on other LAs in DBVP and SVP brought to each meeting.

It was noted that AnnMarie Dodds had experience of working at another LA that had been placed in the SVP and therefore her guidance and knowledge was key in answering questions. It was noted that Hester Collicut also had experience of other LAs in the programmes and it would also be helpful to have her present at Forum meetings.

The Chair drew attention to the recommendations set out in section two of the report as follows:

- 2.1 To agree the HNB deficit budget for 2024-25.
- 2.2 To agree the use of Schools Block transfer for deficit reduction.
- 2.3 To include the current Invest to Save initiatives in the HNB budget for now, with the caveat that their continuation would be reviewed at a later stage alongside other non-statutory spend in the HNB.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations above be approved, whilst acknowledging that an extraordinary meeting of the Forum was required. The Chair invited the Forum to vote on the proposal and at the vote the motion was approved.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- An Extraordinary meeting of the Schools' Forum be set up prior to the next round of meetings in June 2024.
- Timescales and key dates of additional HFG and Forum meetings to be mapped out in time for the next additional HFG.

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- The impact of other LAs in DBV and the SVP to be monitored. This to remain as an ongoing action for Schools' Forum meetings.
- Councillor Heather Codling and Councillor Iain Cottingham to lobby local MPs regarding funding for high needs. Other School Forum Members also to lobby where possible.
- Jess Bailiss to look into whether local MPs could be invited to participate/observe at meetings of the Forum.
- The recommendations set out in section two of the report, including approval of the HNB budget for 2024/25, were approved.

### **7 Final Early Years Block Budget 2024/25 (Avril Allenby/Lisa Potts)**

Avril Allenby introduced the report (Agenda Item 8), which set out the proposal for the Early Years Budget 2024/25, which was based upon the recommendations of the Early Years Funding Group (EYFG). Avril Allenby explained that early years was a complex budget to manage and pointed out that the permeameters had changed over the last five years.

A number of new entitlements were being introduced in 2024-25, which would complicate the area further and were set out in section 4.2 of the report in detail. A lot of work had gone on in the background in anticipation of these changes and detailed discussions had taken place by the EYFG.

Avril Allenby reported that the good news was that the additional funding had been provided for the new entitlements. Recommendations within the report were as follows:

2.1 That the Early Years DSG budget for 2024/25 be set at the level detailed in the budget model and agreed. Thus increasing the 3 and 4 year old rate, the 2 year old rate, the quality rate and deprivation along with an increase in the SEN Inclusion Funding.

2.2 That there remained a focus on deficit recovery and lowering of the pass-through rate.

Avril Allenby reported that the recommendations had been discussed and supported by the EYFG.

Avril Allenby passed over to Lisa Potts to provide information on the deficit. It was about a balance of ensuring the budget and rates for 2024-25 worked well for providers whilst managing the deficit down.

Lisa Potts drew attention to the table under section 4.3 of the report, which showed West Berkshire had received an increase in rates in 2023/24. The table under 5.6 showed the forecast based on the current hours. A slight over spend of £30k was expected, which was positive compared to the much larger overspend seen in previous years.

Lisa Potts explained that the overall deficit was expected to increase in the current year however, the pass through rate for the new year was being brought in line with what was necessary to support the 95 percent pass through rate. When it had been investigated why the deficit recovery plan had not recovered as much as originally hoped, it was noticed that the centrally managed funds were more than five percent of the allocated budget. This was something that would need to be addressed in future years.

Lisa Potts reported that when the budget had been set there had been a pass through rate of 98 percent for three and four year olds. This had reduced with the actual figures received. For 2024/25, rates had been discussed with early years providers and a figure

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had been proposed that would reduce the pass through rate, whilst ensuring providers were catered for.

Lisa Potts drew attention to the extra funding streams for 2024/25 which would increase the overall budget from about £11m to £17m. By applying the new rates it was hoped there would be an in year surplus of about £200k. This would help to bring the overall deficit down.

Keith Harvey commented on the complexity of the budget and noted the good news about the deficit being brought down. He raised concern as to whether the deficit was being reduced fast enough and if this would have consequences for future years. Avril Allenby reported that one of the issues was that the LA had to pass through a set amount to providers, which was 95 percent and this was based on estimated figures. Avril Allenby reported that going forward, it was expected that the Government would be asking LAs to pass through 97 percent. Lisa Potts clarified that this would be 97 percent of the £17m. Lisa Potts reported that historically the LA had been passing through too much however, this had been reduced.

Avril Allenby reported that going forward the local model could be relooked at. There was some flexibility around areas such as deprivation and the quality rate. Locally in West Berkshire, the aim historically had been to reward settings and schools that had qualified teachers or equivalent. As a result, there were a large number of settings and schools that were entitled to the quality rate. It was an expense locally but it meant there was better quality early years provision. This was something that had to be balanced but in the future was an area that might need reviewing.

Reverend Mark Bennet noted that the discussion was focused on money however, the other question was the impact and whether the disadvantaged within the community were being reached. He queried if metrics were being benchmarked to see if life was being made better for children and families locally. Avril Allenby reported that there was some tension in this area because vulnerable two year olds had previously been a standalone group and there had been success in increasing the uptake amongst this group. Going forward some competition would be created in this area because there would also be working parents with two year olds seeking these places. Avril Allenby provided reassurance based on local sufficiency data, that there were enough places in the area. Avril Allenby reported that currently West Berkshire was quite rich in terms of places.

The Chair drew attention to the recommendations set out in section two of the report as set out above. It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations be approved. The Chair invited the Forum to vote on the proposal and at the vote the motion was approved.

**RESOLVED that** the Schools' Forum approved the recommendations set out in section two of the report.

### 8 **Permanent Exclusion Policy (Lisa Potts)**

Lisa Potts introduced the report (Agenda Item 9), which aimed to set out the process for excluded pupils and those with managed moves. It was a policy that had been in place for a number of years however, some areas required updating. The data had been updated to ensure the correct regulations were included.

Lisa Potts reported that some queries had been raised at the Heads Funding Group (HFG) and briefly went through each of them:

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- A member of the HFG had queried the language used for 'managed moves' as it gave the impression it could be stopped after six weeks when this was not the intention: Lisa Potts confirmed that the wording on this had been updated.
- A member of the HFG had queried the matter of when money should move and felt this needed adding to the policy. It had not been felt that money should move instantly as there were potentially appeals/IRPs/PPPs taking place: Lisa Potts reported that this would normally be actioned at least eight weeks after the exclusion due to it being known that appeals often took place. This would be checked with the exclusion officer to ensure the decision was upheld. If there was an individual review panel outstanding, the funding would be removed after this meeting decision.
- A member of the HFG had queried the detail on year 11 learners and money transferring at the end of the year: Lisa Potts reported that it was set out in the Schools operational guidance 24-25 that the 'only exception to using the number of weeks remaining in the financial year is where the exclusion takes place after 1 April, in a school year where the pupil would normally have left at the end of that school year.' Lisa Potts reported that it was not stated if this was June or July however, confirmed that funding would be removed at the end of July because this was what the AWPU was based on.
- A member of the HFG had felt that there was a perverse incentive through the policy for schools to permanently exclude just before the end of the financial year: Lisa Potts reported that the operational guidance set out that 'the local authority must deduct from the school's budget in-year the amount within the formula relating to the age and personal circumstances of that pupil, pro rata to the number of complete weeks remaining in the financial year from the relevant date'.
- A member of the HFG had queried managed moves and whether all schools that signed up to the Fair Access Protocol also signed up to managed moves: Lisa Potts reported that the fair access protocol was managed by a different team to that which managed exclusions, but having spoken to both teams, reported that it was felt that schools would have signed up to both the managed moves and Fair Access Protocol.

Jacque Davies stated it was important to note that the policy was an exclusion funding policy and not an exclusion policy. Jacque Davies referred to the query about when funding for year 11 students transferred and commented that waiting until July would result in some funding going back into the High Needs Block.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

### 9 Deficit Schools (Melanie Ellis)

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item 10), which provided details of the most recent financial forecasts received from each of the nine schools with a licensed deficit and the two schools that had informed West Berkshire Council they expected to end the 2023/24 financial year with an unlicensed deficit balance.

The table under section 4.2 showed the positions when the licenses were approved. A key point to note was that in the column 2023/24, the total approved deficit was £524k. The table under 4.3 showed that the forecast deficit as at period nine had increased to a combined deficit of £691k. This meant that the profile of recovery would likely need to be extended. All but one of the schools were forecasting a worsening position.

The Local Authority (LA) had been made aware that two schools expected to end the year with an unlicensed deficit. The deficit for these schools amounted to £91k as shown

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under section 4.2 of the report. The table in the conclusion to the report showed how the deficits were growing, with an increase from five to 11 schools in deficit over the past four years with the average deficit increasing from £15k to £71k. More schools were expected to fall into deficit in 2024/25.

Reverend Mark Bennet noted that there was some intelligence around budget setting. He raised concern about the pressure on school business managers from the current financial situation and stressed that caring for staff was extremely important. He queried what capacity there was to support business managers. Melanie Ellis reported that there was a dedicated school resource in LA staff member Sarah Reynard, who supported all deficit schools. Melanie Ellis stressed however, that the workload was increasing significantly. Melanie Ellis reported that she was now supporting Sarah Reynard with this increasing workload and they were looking at a risk based profile for schools. Some schools required much more support.

Melanie Ellis further explained that there was still a LA School Accountancy Team and on a risk based approach some schools would be supported by this team, with the more challenging cases to be supported by Sarah Raynard. Rose Carberry and Melanie Ellis attended termly meetings with schools facing the most challenging situations. It was felt that business managers felt supported by the process however, it was often clear the amount of stress these members of staff were under.

Reverend Bennet asked if there was a way that it could be checked that business managers were being adequately supported by governing bodies. Rose Carberry reported that Sarah Reynard had a close working relationship with schools, which were either receiving termly or bi-annual meetings. Some schools also had a school advisor attached. More regular meetings were also taking place with finance governors.

Gemma Piper referred to section 3.2 of the report, where it detailed that the LA possessed the power to remove a deficit schools' delegation and queried what this meant in reality. Rose Carberry reported that a meeting was due to take place soon to speak about this in more detail because currently no schools had required a Notice of Concern to be issued. Any case of this happening would need to be approved by the LA.

Lesley Roberts commented that headteachers were taking on more and more in an attempt to stay out of deficit. Lesley Roberts commented on the importance of lobbying in relation to the pressure facing school finance staff.

Gemma Piper asked what the consequences were if the deficits highlighted in the report were not resolved. Melanie Ellis reported that schools overall were in surplus by about £13m, so currently there was not a deficit against the block. It was noted however, that this could change to a deficit in the future.

Councillor Cottingham noted that the table under section 4.2 showed the annual surplus and deficit, and queried the cumulative position. Melanie Ellis confirmed the information in the table was cumulative data for each school. The Chair highlighted that the information provided forecasts at the current stage.

Rose Carberry referred to further discussion that was due to take place with AnnMarie Dodds shortly regarding the process for schools that were struggling to reduce deficits within the five years provided. The LA was aware of how hard schools were working to try and manage deficits.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

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**10 DSG Monitoring 2023/24 Month 10 (Lisa Potts)**

Lisa Potts introduced the report (Agenda Item 11), which provided a forecast of the financial position of the services funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), highlighting any under or over spends, and to highlight the cumulative deficit on the DSG.

Lisa Potts reported that a slight improvement had been seen in the High Needs Block at month ten of £15k. The additional income for early years had been reflected in the figures. There was nothing further to add at this stage as there had not been a great deal of change since quarter three.

**RESOLVED that** the Schools' Forum noted the report.

**11 Contract Forward Plan**

**RESOLVED that** the contract forward plan was noted.

**12 Date and format of the next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Schools' Forum was due to take place on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 however, an extraordinary meeting would be scheduled to take place prior to this date.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.43 pm)*

**CHAIR** .....

**Date of Signature** .....



# DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

## SCHOOLS FORUM

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8 MAY 2024

**Present:** Reverend Mark Bennet (Church of England Diocese), Nicolle Browning (Maintained Secondary School Headteacher), Councillor Heather Codling (Executive Portfolio Holder: Children and Family Services), Councillor Iain Cottingham (Executive Portfolio Holder: Finance and Resources), Paul Davey (Maintained Primary School Governor), Jackie Davies (Pupil Referral Unit Headteacher), Richard Hand (Trade Union), Keith Harvey (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Jon Hewitt (Maintained Special School Headteacher), Trevor Keable (Academy School Governor), Maria Morgan (Maintained Nursery School Headteacher), Gemma Piper (Academy School Headteacher), Chris Prosser (Maintained Secondary School Headteacher), Campbell Smith (Academy School Governor), Graham Spellman (Roman Catholic Diocese) and Phil Spray (Maintained Primary School Governor)

**Also Present:** Rose Carberry (Principal Adviser for School Improvement), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director - Children and Family Services), Melanie Ellis (Acting Head of Finance and Property), Jane Seymour (Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Team) and Jessica Bailiss (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Michelle Harrison (Maintained Primary School Business Manager), Richard Hawthorne (Academy School Headteacher), Jo Lagares (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Julie Lewry (Academy School Headteacher), Nicola Ponton (Acting Service Manager for SEMH) David Ramsden (Maintained Secondary School Headteacher), Lesley Roberts (Maintained Primary School Headteacher) and Charlotte Wilson (Academy School Headteacher)

#### PART I

##### 1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

##### 2 **Update on the Delivering Better Value Programme (Hester Collicut)**

Hester Collicut introduced the item and reported that she was the Project Manager for the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme and also introduced Susan Tanner who was the new Service Director for DBV. Hester Collicut drew attention to the report on page one of the agenda pack. Hester Collicut reported that they were at the beginning of the implementation stage for DBV and she briefly took the Schools' Forum through the detail of the report. The key points were:

- West Berkshire had been successful in obtaining a grant from the Department for Education (DfE) to implement a programme of improvement for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) over one year.
- The grant amount was one million pounds and there were specific requirements around the delivery of the programme. The aim was to look at high impact areas which could deliver improvements quickly for children and families in West Berkshire.

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- The programme would need to reduce the pressure on the High Needs Block (HNB) through improving service delivery. The DBV Programme identified how this would be done.
- 55 Local Authorities (LAs) were part of the DBV, which was made up of three tranches. Those LAs with the highest level of deficit in their HNB had started the process two years ago. West Berkshire had formed part of the final tranche as its deficit was lower in comparison. As part of this West Berkshire had received the grant money to delivery a transformation programme for children with SEND.
- The programme had been supported by a consultant called Newton Europe, which had been brought in by the DfE to deliver the programme. This support had enabled detailed data analysis. West Berkshire had submitted data in June 2023 and following this trends had been identified, which had been looked into in more detail through consultation and case reviews with families and partner agencies. From this work, key areas of focus for areas of improvement had been identified.
- Work undertaken as part of the DBV was standalone and would be monitored by the DfE. West Berkshire was however now developing its SEND Strategy in light of the DBV Programme to inform strategic SEND work over the next three to five years.
- DBV would reduce statutory spend through earlier identification of need and targeted intervention. Requirements for Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments would be reduced because needs would be addressed earlier. The aim would be to increase the capacity and support for mainstream schools, alternative provision and maintained special schools. This would reduce the use of independent non-maintained special schools where there were high costs.
- Four work streams had been identified as part of the DBV and detail was provided on each of these within the presentation provided. These would be delivered in coproduction with families, educational partners and local area partners including health and social care.

Hester Collicut moved on to provide a detailed presentation about the DBV application and how DBV would be delivered. It was reported that it was expected that about £8m (at full run rate) of savings could be delivered each year once the work streams had been implemented. Impact from the DBV would begin from 2025 however, the programme would take about five years to implement in full.

Keith Harvey noted that a saving of £5.5k per child was expected for those receiving SEND support and he queried if this meant there would be no funding going to these children. Hester Collicut confirmed this was not the case and the aim would be to support early intervention through the training of staff and an access fund. It needed to be identified if a need was long term or short to medium term. If needs were long term, an EHCP might still be required but if targeting could be carried out earlier this might not be necessary. Keith Harvey stated that currently the £5.5k referred to would go towards an adult to provide support. He queried who the staff training would be for if the adults could not be afforded. Hester Collicut explained that it was about early intervention. One to one TA support was not always effective and the new approach would be about evidence based interventions that worked for young people. It would be using resources in a targeted way to meet needs earlier.

Paul Davey asked if the impact costs had been calculated for taking the newly trained staff away from other mainstream pupils. Hester Collicut reported that training for supporting transitions was one area of focus. Children requiring additional support to facilitate a better transition would be identified early and support programmes would be

## SCHOOLS FORUM - 8 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

built around these young people, with staff being upskilled if necessary. Resources would be put in place to help children successfully transition.

Paul Davey further asked what the downside cost consequences were in relation to staff that did not have spare capacity and also on other pupils at a school. Hester Collicut reported it was about meeting the needs of the whole school community. All children would benefit from certain techniques used to support children with SEND. It was not about stretching resources but was about enabling staff to meet more diverse needs. Paul Davey felt this was a critical observation of teaching provided in the classroom at the current time. Hester Collicut disagreed and felt it was about identifying training opportunities and how this could be supported to allow staff to develop this capacity if required. Training needs across schools were currently being audited.

Paul Davey queried if additional resources would be provided or if it was about retraining existing resource. AnnMarie Dodds reported that at the current stage they were concentrating on the HNB and the allocation of resource that was attached to children with additional needs rather than the general education of all children in the classroom. There was limited HNB resource that needed to be targeted in the correct way whilst achieving the most value.

Reverend Mark Bennet referred to current challenges with staff recruitment and was concerned it would not be possible to train staff that were not there. He hoped the plan set out where the people were going to come from. Regarding the example of transitions provided, Reverend Bennet referred to his experience as a governor at numerous settings and felt much of what had been referred to about transitions was known and there was a desire to do it well however, this was not able to happen due to capacity. It was an area that required more resource and this would either need to be taken from somewhere else or would be extra resource. Reverend Bennet was concerned using existing resources would stretch resources more thinly in mainstream. Hester Collicut acknowledged the concern raised and it was understood that support for transitions was a pinch point. Hester Collicut explained that through the DBV grant money it would be possible to look at how the area was currently being resourced, what was working and what additional resource was needed. Resources from the grant could then be targeted to support the area. The aim moving forward was to create a sustainable programme across all areas of DBV work.

Trevor Keable noted the financial evaluation however queried what academic and social evaluation had been carried out on the new programme. Hester Collicut reported that the programme of work had been through stringent scrutiny by the identified agencies. There was a great deal of detailed data analysis and time had been spent looking at the impact of activity over the last few years. It was a DfE Programme that involved participation by 55 LAs and aimed to reduce pressure on the HNB by improving outcomes and supporting transformation across SEND. If the programme was not undertaken there would be an increase in pressure on the HNB, which in turn would reduce resources going into schools.

AnnMarie Dodds reaffirmed the points raised and highlighted that DBV was essentially a government intervention. Evidence from West Berkshire had been viewed by Newton Europe, which was a well-established consultancy appointed by the DfE and they had set out the areas that needed to be focused on. These were the areas set out in the information provided by Hester Collicut. It was a transformation programme about sustainability for children across West Berkshire with a focus on children with additional needs, which were those supported by the HNB.

Hester Collicut continued with her presentation, which provided detailed information on confidence weightings against DBV opportunities. Data was also provided showing the impact if DBV work was not undertaken and if pressures were not addressed. The

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number of children in independent non-maintained provision would increase substantially by 2026, when the average costs of these placements was significant. Further data showed how numbers would be positively impacted through DBV mitigation work. Information was provided on how figures had been identified through looking at cases and the detailed analysis on what was driving trends, for example for increased numbers of EHCPs. Hester Collicut provided detailed information on the four DBV workstreams that would deliver to the programme.

Trevor Keable asked for clarification on some of the figures provided in the presentation. It appeared there was an increase from 1200 children requiring support in 2024 to 1600 requiring support in 2028, which was an increase of about 25 percent. Hester Collicut reported that this reflected the national trend of increasing demand for statutory assessments. West Berkshire's percentage increase was less than many other LA areas however, significant increases in requests for assessments were still being seen. It was clarified that this increase was expected to continue despite the number of pupils going through school reducing.

Phil Spray reflected on the challenge facing the HNB, which had been discussed fully at previous meetings. He was mindful that there was a balance to be struck between addressing the HNB and the wider impact the programme could have on schools across the district. Phil Spray asked for clarification on how many school representatives had been consulted and how this had been offset against their work in the classroom, as it was well recognised that teachers were overstretched. Phil Spray recognised that co-design was not something that could happen quickly and required a significant time commitment. It was therefore further queried if there was a plan in place for resourcing this approach. Hester Collicut reported that the programme was being delivered through four workstream groups, which met monthly. Each of these groups reported into the DBV Task Group, which in turn informed the SEND Transformation Board. There were school representatives on each of the workstreams and there was a desire to widen the headteacher representation on these groups. An idea of backfilling positions in schools had been suggested to enable teacher representatives to contribute. Hester Collicut reported that they were very mindful of the pressures however, it was important this was balanced to ensure the process was consultative.

Reverend Bennet observed from the report that preventative work invested in over the last few years was having an impact and West Berkshire had relatively fewer EHCPs than other LA areas. He queried if some of the increased unit costs were to do with economies of scale. Reverend Bennet referred to the number of small schools in the district and raised concern about these schools being expected to find management time, as this was a particularly scarce resource. This was a feature of West Berkshire as an authority that needed to be incorporated. Hester Collicut agreed and reported that this matter would be incorporated into a wider SEND Strategy, which the DBV programme was part of. The wider SEND Strategy would look at how schools were being supported to access services dependant on size. Hester Collicut reported they were only at the start of the DBV programme and how it was developed was up to schools. Input would be required to ensure the views of different types of schools were reflected. It was acknowledged however, that there were constraints around the capacity of staff.

Reverend Bennet noted that the largest savings seemed to be around the commissioning of non-maintained special schools and avoiding placements, which presented other challenges. He asked how it was known if there was enough money currently available to meet statutory requirements and obligations. It was felt that this was a piece of strategic work that was missing.

Reverend Bennet further commented that working in multiagency partnerships was something schools were already involved in and did not always work well, particularly if

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some agencies failed to attend. Hester Collicut clarified that by using the term multiagency she had meant that they would be working collaboratively with partners.

Reverend Bennet further queried that the assurance efficiency language seemed to imply that surplus places would be funded to ensure places were available when needs arose. Hester Collicut confirmed that this was not the case and the sufficiency strategy would ensure there was capacity available to meet needs. It was a very granular approach and the aim was to identify children early. The sufficiency strategy would enable gaps in provision to be identified and systems needed to be put in place to ensure demand could be responded to quickly, which was not something that had been possible in the past for a variety of different reasons.

Keith Harvey understood that the aim was to save money however, he was concerned about the reality of life in mainstream schools where there was increasing staff turnover due to staff finding the reality of school life very difficult. Keith Harvey was concerned that increased cuts would drive out good people and leave the area with a weaker education system. Hester Collicut agreed that recruitment and retention was critical to delivery and this was an area that required focus. Hester Collicut stressed that DBV was not a cutting programme and it was about aligning services, identifying opportunities and targeting resources at a more appropriate time. It was inevitable that spending would need to be reduced but the aim was to do it in an effective way so children were not penalised.

AnnMarie Dodds responded to some of the points raised by Reverend Bennet. In terms of expectations on schools, it was not about the LA making demands of schools. A collaborative approach was being taken because this was the best approach for children. It was appreciated that not all school leaders/representatives could attend all sessions and AnnMarie Dodds stated that this was where she would appeal to schools to ensure as a sector there was communication and support between leaders, to ensure all were kept informed.

AnnMarie Dodds reminded the Forum that the LA was commissioning places on behalf of schools for children that schools were unable to cater for and it was acknowledged that some children needed something different. There would be much more robust commissioning practises in place in West Berkshire compared to what there had been previously.

AnnMarie Dodds reported that they knew the cost of statutory intervention and disagreed that statutory costs were not known. The amount that was being spent against the HNB year on year was known and most of this was assigned to statutory interventions. AnnMarie Dodds reminded the Forum that it was about a budget that had been overspent over a number of years.

AnnMarie Dodds agreed with Hester Collicut's comments in relation to surplus placements and confirmed they would not be commissioning surplus placements. Early identification of need and the sufficiency strategy was essential and all decisions would be evidence based.

In response to the point raised by Keith Harvey, AnnMarie Dodds reported that there was a limited budget but it was up to them how it was used. There was a National Funding Formula and rules that governed where money could be spent and how money could be transferred between the funding blocks. The only freedom available was within this formula. The risk to not influencing financially sustainable change across the next 12 months was that control would be lost of the DSG. AnnMarie Dodds commented on other LA areas that had lost control and where there had been larger transfers from the Schools' Block to the HNB. The situation in every school would become more difficult if they did not get a hold on the challenge.

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Susan Tanner added to the points made about smaller schools. It was recognised not all schools would be able to engage in the DBV programme and it was reported that a DBV communication strategy was being developed to sit alongside engagement work. This would ensure schools would be engaged with directly regarding progress and would be provided with opportunities outside of meetings to feedback. Susan Tanner reported that herself or Hester Collicut would be happy to attend the primary or secondary heads forums when required, to talk to headteachers about the programme. Susan Tanner invited other suggestions and ideas on how to engage with schools.

In response to Ketih Harvey's concern about the programme being a cost cutting exercise, Susan Tanner felt it was important to shape language around improving outcomes for children and intervening earlier. It was important to ensure that every pound spent going forward on the HNB was a pound that ought to have been spent. Susan Tanner was not confident they were in that position yet. In some cases, needs were not being met early enough which was causing unavoidable cost. This cost was what needed to reduce whilst improving outcomes for children and as a consequence the aim was to make it easier for schools.

Councillor Iain Cottingham referred to comments about reducing costs and stated that that this was not how he viewed the programme. Over the next financial year, the Finance Service were focusing on the concept of activity based costing, which looked at the unit costs of service delivery. Councillor Cottingham would be liaising with the Finance Team to introduce activity based benchmarking to ensure financial efficiencies were being maximised to deliver the best quality services at the lowest unit cost. West Berkshire was ahead of the game regarding the unit cost of delivery and in his view it was about doing more with what was available rather than reducing costs.

The Chair commented on the range of views that had been raised through the discussion and the importance of AnnMarie Dodd's comment regarding the current freedoms that would be lost if the programme of work was not successful.

Richard Hand noted discussions and that it was a compulsory process that needed to be progressed. He referred to Keith Harvey's point about the staff and felt that there was no doubt that the programme would increase workload for staff. His members were already under the cosh with case work about workload and demands. He acknowledged the work had to be done however, stated it was important to recognise there would be impact on workload.

Phil Spray stated he fully recognised the scale of the challenge facing the HNB however, in his view, the view of the Forum was to ensure a balance was struck between looking at costs whilst not losing sight of the education outcomes for children. If they did not get it right it would have real consequences on children.

Hester Collicut thanked the Forum for all the points raised. As mentioned a communication strategy was being developed and as part of this schools would receive key updates through a variety of different avenues over the coming months.

The Chair wished Officers well with the project and acknowledged the scale of the challenge. He welcomed the consultation proposed, which would help deliver success.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools' Forum noted the information presented.

### **3 Letter to West Berkshire Members of Parliament**

The Chair drew attention to the letter that had been sent from the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeff Brooks, to West Berkshire Members of Parliament (MP) regarding High Needs Block (HNB) funding.

The Chair reported that he had also sent a letter to Laura Farris MP regarding pressure facing the HNB. At the last Forum meeting in March, it had been requested it be looked

## SCHOOLS FORUM - 8 MAY 2024 - MINUTES

into whether MPs could be invited to attend meetings of the Forum. Having checked the Schools' Forum Regulations it had been agreed that a letter would be a more appropriate approach. Thoughts had been made very clear in the letter to Laura Farris regarding the level of funding for the HNB and a copy of the relevant section of minutes from the last meeting where the HNB was discussed was included. No response had yet been received.

Councillor Heather Codling referred to the letter to MPs from the Deputy Leader of the Council, which had been a result of an action from the last Forum meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March, where it had been requested that Councillors write to local MPs emphasising the matter of low funding for high needs. It had been felt that a letter from the Deputy Leader would be the best approach. Councillor Codling believed Alok Sharma MP had responded but only to state that he would pass the matter onto colleagues. No response had yet been received from the other two West Berkshire MPs.

Trevor Keable reported that Denefield School had also written to the local MP Alok Sharma, who had subsequently responded to say he was leaving office and suggested that Ross Mackinnon be contacted who would be standing. The Labour representative who would be standing for Reading West had also been contacted. Trevor Keable reported that both had agreed to come and speak to Denefield School and talk through issues in July and other schools were welcome to attend if they wished. Trevor Keable felt that effort should be made to push political avenues in a clear, organised way that emphasised that education needed to be a priority in the new parliament.

The Chairman hoped that a response would be received from Laura Farris and other MPs prior to the next election. High Needs provision was a serious issue and he commended efforts made to push this forward.

**RESOLVED** that the Schools' Forum noted the update.

### 4 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Schools' Forum would take place virtually on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 from 5pm.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.25 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....

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## Actions from previous meetings

Ref No.	Date of meeting (s)	Item	Action	Responsible Officer	Update
Mar24-Ac1	11th March 2024	HNB Budget 2024/25	An Extraordinary meeting of the Schools' Forum to be set up prior to the next round of meeting in June 2024.	Jess Bailiss	Meeting took place on 8th May 2024.
Mar24-Ac2	11th March 2024	HNB Budget 2024/25	Timescales and key dates of additional HFG and Forum meetings to be mapped out in time for the next additional HFG.	Hester Collicut / Jess Bailiss	Completed. Information was provided to additional meeting of HFG in April. Further additional meetings of the HFG have now been cancelled and the DBV Task Group will report into ordinary HFG meetings.
Mar24-Ac3	11th March 2024	HNB Budget 2024/25	The impact of other LAs in DBV and the SVP to be monitored. This to remain as an ongoing action for Schools' Forum meetings.	Jane Seymour / Hester Collicut	Nothing has changed since this information was reported in April/May time. Four Authorities have transferred from DBV to Safety Valve – as previously reported. There is increasing political noise around LAs not meeting their statutory duties in meeting SEND requirements because of the agreement they have signed with DfE on reducing spend.
Mar24-Ac4	11th March 2024	HNB Budget 2024/25	Councillor Heather Codling and Councillor Iain Cottingham to lobby local MPs regarding funding for high needs. Other School Forum Members also to lobby where possible.	Cllr Codling and Cllr Cottingham	A letter has been sent to local MPs from the Deputy Leader of Council. A response was circulated to members of the Forum on 22nd May.

Mar24-Ac5	11th March 2024	HNB Budget 2024/25	Jess Bailiss to look into whether Local MPs could be invited to participate/observe at meetings of the Forum.	Jess Bailiss	Having checked the Schools' Forum Regulations it was agreed that a letter would be the most appropriate approach. A letter was sent to Laura Farris MP on 25th April, along with the relevant section of the minutes from 11th March. A response has been received from Laura Farris noting the concerns and stating that she had written to David Johnston MP, Minister for Children at the DfE, to ask for a meeting with him, and would be in touch with an update once this has taken place.
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## Scheme for Financing Schools: clawback mechanism

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<b>Report being considered by:</b>	Schools Forum 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2024		
<b>Report Author:</b>	Melanie Ellis		
<b>Item for:</b>	Decision	<b>By:</b>	All Maintained Schools Representatives

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### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 A consultation was undertaken with all schools in November 2023 on the updates to the 2023/24 Scheme for Financing Schools. One of the Local Authority recommendations was for the inclusion of a clawback mechanism in the updated Scheme for Financing Schools (SFF). The consultation result was 68% in support of a clawback mechanism.
- 1.2 The clawback mechanism was discussed at Heads Funding Group in December who supported including a clawback mechanism in the SFF and applying it from 31.3.24 on balances over 10% of budget share, less any evidenced commitments, to be applied on a sliding scale in year one.
- 1.3 Schools Forum voted on this recommendation in December 2023, and voted to include a clawback mechanism in the SFF, but only from 31.3.25.
- 1.4 The Local Authority has spoken to the Department for Education regarding the appeal mechanism available to it when Schools Forum vote against local authority recommendations, but before a decision is made regarding this action, would like Schools Forum to review the original decision, in the light of now having the final balance information for 31.2.24.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Heads Funding Group of 5.6.24 recommend that the Schools Forum:
  - (1) Revisit the decision to introduce the clawback mechanism in the updated Scheme for Financing Schools (SFF) based on balances as at 31.3.25.
- 2.2 The Local Authority recommends that Schools Forum:
  - (1) Review the balance information contained within this report, and reconsider implementation of the clawback mechanism on balances as at 31.3.24.
  - (2) The maximum amount that could be clawed back each year is the amount of school balance in excess of 10% of their budget share. This is subject to leaving the schools with a minimum of £50,000 balance. The actual amount to be clawed back will be recommended by Heads

**Scheme for Financing Schools: clawback mechanism**

Funding Group after reviewing the commitments on the statement. Schools Forum would then make the decision.

- (3) Funds should be returned as follows:
  - (a) Special Schools – high needs block
  - (b) Secondary Schools – high needs block
  - (c) Primary Schools – maintained primaries

Is the Schools' Forum required to make a decision as part of this report or subsequent versions due to be considered later in the meeting cycle?	
Yes: x	No:

**3. Implications and Impact Assessment**

Equalities Impact:	Positive	No Impact	Negative	Commentary
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
<b>Data Impact:</b>		x		
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Heads Funding Group, all schools.			

## 4. Introduction

4.1 The DfE Scheme for Financing Schools says the following:

*The scheme may contain a mechanism to claw back excess surplus balances. Any mechanism should have regard to the principle that schools should be moving towards greater autonomy, should not be constrained from making early efficiencies to support their medium-term budgeting in a tighter financial climate, and should not be burdened by bureaucracy.*

*The mechanism should, therefore, be focused on only those schools which have built up significant excessive uncommitted balances or where some level of redistribution would support improved provision across a local area.*

4.2 It is sound financial management for maintained schools to plan their budgets over more than one year and to be given the flexibility to manage their finances and retain a reserve from year to year. The Scheme for Financing Schools requires that schools must submit a three-year budget each year. This enables schools to:

- (1) Progress capital works where capital resources are insufficient,
- (2) Progress 'spend to save' strategies,
- (3) Support costs associated with expanding or reducing pupil numbers,
- (4) Support reducing funding or increasing costs or manage exceptional circumstances to avoid an impact on standards at the school.

4.3 However, this should only be if the Governing Body has made deliberate decisions to allocate revenue funding for these purposes with a clear timescale for spending, and that these decisions do not impact from maximising in-year spending on the school's key priorities.

4.4 This must be balanced against the Local Authority duty to maximise the spending of resources, targeted correctly, to improve outcomes for children and young people.

4.5 A clawback mechanism is important in enabling the Local Authority, with the Schools Forum, to redistribute funding that is not being used by schools. The Schools' Forum has not clawed back excess surplus balances since 2015, when the level of excess balances had significantly reduced.

## 5. Current position

5.1 School balances in 2015 were £4m. The school balances at 31st March 2024 total £13.4m.

5.2 £11.2m is being held in Main School Budget (MSB) balances at 31.3.2024 (compared to £3.6m at 31.3.2020), £500k in other revenue balances, £350k in before and after school club funds and £1.3m in capital balances. The MSB balance has increased by £400k from last year overall, with primary schools decreasing by £384k and other schools categories all increasing their balances.

## Scheme for Financing Schools: clawback mechanism

- 5.3 The table below shows those schools with a MSB surplus balance greater than 10% of their funding and above £50k as at 31.3.24. Total balances greater than 10% and £50k total £4.8m.

Main School Budget Balance		2022/23	2023/24	% of funding	Balance > 10% and > than £50k
School	Funding Block				
Victoria Park Nursery	Early Years	<b>72,277</b>	<b>149,760</b>	20%	74,431
Beedon	Schools	67,618	65,718	15%	15,718
Chaddleworth and Shefford Federation	Schools	87,012	86,479	12%	11,382
Curridge Primary	Schools	53,622	75,025	12%	12,833
Garland Junior	Schools	68,246	171,928	13%	44,333
John Rankin Schools Federation	Schools	414,775	503,665	16%	196,009
Parsons Down Schools Federation	Schools	218,432	288,513	17%	114,134
Springfield Primary School	Schools	352,615	400,089	23%	228,067
		<b>1,262,319</b>	<b>1,591,417</b>		<b>622,476</b>
The Downs School	Schools	<b>1,211,610</b>	<b>1,467,308</b>	17%	<b>603,791</b>
Brookfields Special School	High Needs	3,445,943	3,804,042	51%	3,054,548
The Castle School	High Needs	1,147,535	847,633	15%	268,564
		<b>4,593,478</b>	<b>4,651,675</b>		<b>3,323,112</b>
iCollege Alternative Provision	High Needs	<b>413,937</b>	<b>551,982</b>	13%	<b>204,890</b>
		<b>7,553,621</b>	<b>8,412,142</b>		<b>4,828,700</b>

- 5.4 The schools in the table should provide a School Balance Statement for their MSB to outline plans and commitments against these balances. These will be presented to the Heads Funding Group in July.

## 6. Clawback mechanism proposal

- 6.1 When and how to clawback:

The clawback mechanism should be included in the Scheme for Financing Schools. Clawbacks should be based on balances at 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.

- 6.2 Circumstances leading to clawback:

Surplus balances should continue to be reported at each year end. Schools with balances over 10% of their budget share (the amount of funding allocated via the funding formula) should prepare a School Balance Statement to be reviewed by HFG to ensure information surrounding commitments is justified and reasonable.

The statements should outline commitments for:

## Scheme for Financing Schools: clawback mechanism

- Capital, building and ICT works
- Unspent Pupil Premium
- Unspent Sports Fund
- Prior year commitments not accrued for
- Specific grant balances
- Other commitments

Any uncommitted balance and anything in the statement that it is deemed should be covered by future budgets rather than balances, could be subject to clawback.

### 6.3 Amount of clawback

The maximum amount that could be clawed back each year is the amount of school balance in excess of 10% of their budget share. This is subject to leaving the schools with a minimum of £50,000 balance.

The actual amount to be clawed back will be recommended by Heads Funding Group after reviewing the commitments on the statement. Schools Forum would then make the decision.

### 6.4 Redistribution of funds

Any clawed back funds should be returned as follows:

- Special school funding to the High needs block
- Secondary funding to the High needs block
- Primary funding to either maintained primaries or to the High needs block.

### 6.5 Timetable

- Report on school balances: HFG and SF June 2024
- School balance statements submitted: 30.6.24
- HFG review of balances and recommendation of clawback: July 2024
- SF approval: July 2024
- Clawback actioned: July 2024

## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 A – School Balance Statement example

#### Appendix A

	Actuals				% of funding	Balance > 10%	Forecast		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
<b>Main School Budget Balance</b>									
School name	10,000	20,000	30,000	40,000	16%	26,356			
<b>Total MSB at 31.3.24</b>				<b>40,000</b>					
<b>Commitments</b>									
1 Capital, building and ICT works (eg. Planned work for 23/24 that will require a revenue contribution to capital and cannot be fully supported by existing capital monies) - add detail below			2,000						
2 Unspent Pupil Premium (only if not held in separate fund)			1,000						
3 Unspent Sports Fund (only if not held in separate fund)			8,000						
4 Prior year commitments not accrued for (eg outstanding orders)			4,000						
5 Specific grant balances (add detail below)									
6 Self generated income									
7 Other commitments			0						
<b>Total Commitments</b>				<b>15,000</b>					
<b>Uncommitted balance</b>				<b>25,000</b>					
Explanation of capital commitments and timescale of spend:									
Explanation of unspent grants and timescale of spend:									
Explanation of other commitments and timescale of spend:									



## Scheme for Financing Schools

**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Report Author:** Melanie Ellis

**Item for:** Decision **By:** All Maintained Schools

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To approve the proposed consultation on the updated Scheme for Financing Schools to go to Schools Forum.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the updated Scheme for Financing Schools goes out to consultation from 18<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and that the updated scheme is adopted after Schools Forum approval.

**Is the Schools' Forum required to make a decision as part of this report or subsequent versions due to be considered later in the meeting cycle?**

Yes:

No:

### 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Equalities Impact:	Positive	No Impact	Negative	Commentary
	<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x	
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		

<b>Data Impact:</b>		x		
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>				

#### 4. Introduction/Background

- 4.1 Local authorities are required to publish schemes for financing schools which set out the financial relationship between the local authority and the schools they maintain.
- 4.2 The Department for Education (DfE) issues statutory guidance for local authorities on schemes for financing schools. The DfE guidance lists the provisions which a local authority must, should or may include. Local schemes need not follow the exact format used in the DfE guidance, except for the text of directed revisions. The DfE guidance is updated annually.
- 4.3 Issue 16 was published on 28 March 2024 and can be found at:

[Schemes for financing local authority maintained schools 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/schemes-for-financing-local-authority-maintained-schools-2024-to-2025.pdf)

- 4.4 In making any changes to the scheme, a local authority must consult all maintained schools in their area and receive the approval of the members of their schools forum representing maintained schools.
- 4.5 The local authority has reviewed the current scheme to ensure that all sections are still appropriate. Following on from this review four updates are proposed. The proposed Scheme for Financing Schools (2024 update) and Appendix B highlighting the proposed updates are attached.

#### 5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 The proposed Scheme for Financing Schools (2022) is attached to this document, along with a guide to changes that have been made.

#### 6. Proposals

- 6.1 A consultation with maintained schools be undertaken between 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

#### 7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – Proposed Scheme for Financing Schools
- 7.2 Appendix B – Changes from previous version
- 7.3 Appendix C – Consultation cover document

# West Berkshire Council Scheme For Financing Schools 2024/25

Reference: SFF2024  
Version No: 1.2  
Issue Date:

## Document Control

<b>Document Ref:</b>	SFS2024	<b>Date Created:</b>	23.05.24
<b>Version:</b>	1.2	<b>Date Modified:</b>	28.05.24
<b>Revision due</b>	Following publication by DfE of Issue 16		
<b>Author:</b>	Melanie Ellis/Sarah Reynard	<b>Sign &amp; Date:</b>	
<b>Head of Service:</b>	Melanie Ellis	<b>Sign &amp; Date:</b>	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment: (EIA)</b>	Date undertaken:	N/A	
	Issues (if any):	N/A	

## Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1.0	12.09.23	Updated for issue 15	
		Paragraph 8.4 income from sale of assets. Further guidance added on retention of funds from the sale of land assets.	
1.1	10.01.24	Updated for claw back mechanism	
1.2	28.05.24	Updated for issue 16	

## Related Documents

Reference	Title	Tier
	Scheme for financing local authority maintained schools 2024 to 2025 Updated 28.03.24 Issue 16 <a href="https://www.gov.uk">Schemes for financing local authority maintained schools 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>	

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## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This scheme sets out the financial relationship between the authority and the maintained schools which it funds. It contains requirements relating to financial management and associated issues, binding on both the authority and on the schools.

## **2. Applicability**

- 2.1. The scheme applies to all community, nursery, special, voluntary, foundation schools (including trust), foundation special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) maintained by the authority, (as listed in Annex A), whether they are situated in the area of the authority or elsewhere. It does not apply to schools situated in the authority's area which are maintained by another authority, nor does it apply to academies.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 3.1. The Chief Finance Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that this scheme is managed appropriately in accordance with these agreed standards.

- 3.2. The Schools Forum is responsible for:

- Directing and reviewing this scheme.
- Ensuring that there is effective consultation and communication on scheme related matters in terms of changes and updates issued by the Department for Education (DfE).
- Ensuring compliance with the DfE's directions in relation to the scheme.

Any proposed revisions to the scheme will be the subject of consultation with the governing body and the headteacher of every school maintained by the authority before they are submitted to the schools forum for approval.

All proposed revisions must be submitted to the schools forum for approval by members of the forum representing maintained schools. Where the schools forum does not approve them or approves them subject to modifications which are not acceptable to the authority, the authority may apply to the Secretary of State for approval.

It is also possible for the Secretary of State to make directed revisions to schemes after consultation. Such revisions become part of the scheme from the date of the direction.

- 3.3. The West Berkshire Council (WBC) Finance and Audit Teams are responsible for the day-to-day management of the scheme including ensuring implementation of this standard.

- 3.4. All WBC staff who have financial dealings with and the relevant staff and governors of all schools listed in Annex A are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and ensuring that they comply with this scheme.

## 4. Introduction

### 4.1. The funding framework: main features

The funding framework, which replaces Local Management of Schools, is set out in the legislative provisions in sections 45 to 53 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (the act).

Under this legislation, local authorities determine for themselves the size of their schools budget and their non-schools education budget, although at a minimum an authority must appropriate its entire Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to its schools budget.

The categories of expenditure which fall within the 2 budgets are prescribed under regulations made by the Secretary of State, but included within the 2, taken together, is all expenditure, direct and indirect, on an authority's maintained schools except for capital and certain miscellaneous items.

Authorities may deduct funds from their schools budget for purposes specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 45A of the act (the centrally retained expenditure).

The amounts to be deducted for these purposes are decided by the authority concerned, subject to any limits or conditions, including gaining the approval of their schools' forum or the Secretary of State in certain instances, as prescribed by the Secretary of State.

The balance of the schools budget left after deduction of centrally retained expenditure is termed the Individual Schools Budget (ISB). Expenditure items in the non-schools education budget must be retained centrally, although earmarked allocations may be made to schools.

Authorities must distribute the ISB amongst their maintained schools using a formula which accords with regulations made by the Secretary of State and enables the calculation of a budget share for each maintained school.

This budget share is then delegated to the governing body of the school concerned, unless the school is a new school which has not yet received a delegated budget, or the right to a delegated budget has been suspended in accordance with section 51 of the act.

The financial controls within which delegation works are set out in a scheme made by the authority in accordance with section 48 of the act and regulations made under that section.

All proposals to revise the scheme must be approved by the schools forum, though the authority may apply to the Secretary of State for approval in the event of the forum rejecting a proposal or approving it subject to modifications that are not acceptable to the authority.

Subject to any provision made by or under the scheme, governing bodies of schools may spend such amounts of their budget shares as they think fit for any purposes of their school and for any additional purposes prescribed by the Secretary of State in regulations made under section 50 of the act.

Section 50 has been amended to provide that amounts spent by a governing body on providing community facilities or services under section 27 of the Education Act 2002 are treated as if they were amounts spent for the purposes of the school (section 50 (3A) of the act).

The authority may suspend a school's right to a delegated budget if the provisions of the authority's financial scheme, or rules applied by the scheme, have been substantially or persistently breached, or if the budget share has not been managed satisfactorily.

A school's right to a delegated budget share may also be suspended for other reasons, under schedule 17 to the act.

Each authority is obliged to publish each year a statement setting out details of its planned schools budget and other expenditure on children's services, showing the amounts to be centrally retained and funding delegated to schools; after each financial year the authority must publish a statement showing outturn expenditure.

The detailed publication requirements for financial statements are set out in directions issued by the Secretary of State.

A copy of each year's budget and outturn statement should be made easily accessible to all schools.

As required by regulations the authority will publish its scheme and any revisions to it on the WBC website, <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/> which is accessible to the general public, by the date the revisions come into force, together with a statement that the revised scheme comes into force on that date.

#### 4.2. Delegation of powers to the headteacher

Each governing body should consider the extent to which it wishes to delegate its financial powers to the headteacher and record its decision (and any revisions) in the minutes of the governing body.

The first formal budget plan of each financial year must be approved by the governing body, or by a committee of the governing body.

In terms of the headteachers' role in financial management, governors may wish to delegate powers as follows:

- Responsibility for day-to-day management of resources (practical day to day management of resources may also be delegated to other senior staff and/or the school business manager/finance officer);
- Signing off of all orders/cheques/BACS payments within a monitoring system approved by governors or under a certain sum to be decided by governors;
- Administration of the expenditure budget within the annual amount of any budget heading or authorisation of spending up to (a sum agreed with the governing body) within a budget heading;
- Authority over virement up to a sum agreed with the governing body;

- Monitor day to day management of the budget;
- Provision of regular reports to the governing body on expenditure and income;
- Preparation of the budget estimates of expenditure and income for governing body approval.

It is recognised that the level of delegation will be based on practice, experience, knowledge, size and resources of the school.

#### 4.3. Maintenance of schools

The authority is responsible for maintaining the schools covered by the scheme, and this includes the duty of defraying all the expenses of maintaining them (except in the case of a voluntary-aided school where some of the expenses are, by statute, payable by the governing body). Part of the way an authority maintains schools is through the funding system put in place under sections 45 to 53 of the act.

### 5. Financial Controls

#### 5.1. General Procedures

##### 5.1.1 Application of financial controls to schools

In managing their delegated budgets schools are required to abide by the authority's requirements on financial controls and monitoring.

Certain of these are directly referred to in this scheme while others are included in the authority's Constitution Parts 9 Financial Rules and 8 Contract Rules of Procedure. Copies of these can be found on the following web page:

[Council Constitution - West Berkshire Council](#)

The authority's requirements can differ for schools with their own bank accounts.

##### 5.1.2 Provision of financial information and reports

Schools are required to provide the authority with details of anticipated and actual expenditure and income, in a form determined by the authority, compatible with the Consistent Financial Reporting framework. This information must be provided within one month of each quarter end (i.e. by 31 July, 31 October, 31 January and 30 April) unless:

- the authority has notified the school in writing that in its view the school's financial position requires more frequent submission or;
- the school is in its first year of operation or;
- the information is required in connection with tax or banking reconciliation when it can be requested more frequently.



This provision does not apply to schools submitting an imprest and which are part of the financial accounting system operated by the authority (Agresso). However these schools are required to submit their month nine budget monitoring forecasts by the 10<sup>th</sup> working day of January each year unless

- the authority has notified the school in writing that in its view the school's financial position requires more frequent submission or;
- the school has applied for or is operating with a licensed deficit budget or;
- the school ended the previous financial with an unlicensed deficit budget.

This is in addition to the requirement for annual budget plans.

### 5.1.3 Payment of salaries and payment of bills

The procedures for these will vary according to the choices schools make about the holding of bank accounts and any buy back of services from the authority.

#### 5.1.3.1 Payment of salaries

In all cases schools are required to abide by the authority's financial regulations covering payments to staff.

##### *Schools buying back the authority's payroll service*

The authority can provide a payroll service that complies with all the statutory requirements and the conditions of service requirements for teaching and local government staff. The payroll service will also cover the deduction and paying over of contributions to both the Local Government Pension Scheme and the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Under this service, all payments to staff, HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC), Teachers' Pension Agency etc. will be made from the authority's bank accounts either direct to the school's ledger accounts if on the council's financial system, or by the issue of an invoice to the school.

All Pay as You Earn (PAYE) matters will be dealt with under the authority's PAYE registration number, except where the school's annual salaries exceed £3million in which case the school's own PAYE registration number will be used.

The processing timetables and documents to be used for notification of all payroll variations are issued to schools by the payroll section.

Details of the buyback services and charges will be notified to schools ahead of each financial year.

##### *Schools making alternative payroll arrangements*

The school, as payroll provider, would need to ensure separate registration with the HMRC, Teachers' Pension Agency and Local Government Pension Scheme and would need upon request to satisfy the authority that all payments of deductions and contributions were being made in an

appropriate and timely manner and all statutory reporting requirements can be met for HMRC, Teachers Pensions and Berkshire Pensions.

#### 5.1.3.2. Payment of bills

All schools are required to abide by the authority's financial regulations covering payments to creditors.

#### 5.1.4. Control of assets

Each school must maintain an inventory in accordance with the authority's financial regulations recording its moveable non-capital assets worth more than £1,000 and setting out the basic authorisation procedures for disposal of assets.

For assets worth less than £1,000, schools should keep a register, but this may be in a form as determined by the school. Schools are encouraged to register anything that is portable and attractive, such as a camera.

#### 5.1.5. Accounting policies, including year-end procedures

Schools are required to comply with the procedures, requirements and regulations relating to the accounting policies and end of year financial procedures issued and determined by the authority as being applicable to schools.

This will include the setting of a de-minimus level for capital spend which as a guideline will be in the range of £2,000 to £5,000. As a default the authority de-minimus will apply, currently £5,000 or £2,000 for VA schools.

Year-end guidance will be issued annually to schools on the practical arrangements e.g. accruals and other end of year financial procedures.

#### 5.1.6. Writing off debts

No debt shall be discharged other than by payment in full or being written-off.

The writing-off of non-recoverable debts is subject to individual consideration of the debt and appropriate approval. Those debts less than £2,000 may be written-off subject to the authorisation of the authority's Chief Finance Officer (or nominated officer) and the Executive Director – Children and Family Services after the consideration of a report by the headteacher. All other debts may only be written off by the above after consideration of a recommendation from the appropriate governing body.

This provision does not apply to the cancellation of invoices because a debt is deemed to be no longer due. Invoice cancellations can be approved by the headteacher.

### 5.2. Basis of Accounting

The authority prepares its statutory accounts on an accruals basis. Maintained schools are required to ensure that annual spending notified to the authority and Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) returns are on an accruals basis. However, schools can choose their own basis of accounting for internal accounting and reporting.

Schools can choose which financial software they wish to use, provided they meet any costs of modification to provide the output required by the authority. In particular schools should be able to report separately to the authority on revenue and capital expenditure, and on any funds held by them on behalf of collaborative ventures with other schools where specified by the authority in order to demonstrate that only public funds have been reported to the authority and provide an audit trail back to the accounts for each of the separate funds.

### 5.3. Submission of budget plans

Each school is required to submit a budget plan to the authority **by 1<sup>st</sup> May each year**. The plan must show the school's intentions for expenditure in the current financial year and the assumptions underpinning the budget plan, which include taking full account of any estimated deficits/surpluses at the previous 31<sup>st</sup> March.

The format of the budget submission must be as specified by the authority, consistent with the CFR framework, and must be approved by the governing body or a committee of the governing body.

Where the authority deems it necessary it may also require the submission of revised plans throughout the year. Such revised plans shall not be required at intervals of less than three months.

The authority will supply schools with all school income and expenditure data, which it holds and which is necessary to efficient planning by schools.

#### 5.3.1. Submission of financial forecasts

From the 2021 to 2022 funding year each school is required to submit to the authority a three-year budget forecast (five if in deficit) each year. This is required in the agreed format **by 1<sup>st</sup> May each year**.

This is to provide evidence of

- schools undertaking effective strategic financial planning,
- adhering to best financial management practice,
- to alert the authority of any schools having difficulty in balancing future year budgets and
- may be used as evidence to support the authority's assessment of schools financial value standards or in support of the authority's balance control mechanism.

### 5.4. School resource management

Schools must seek to achieve effective management of resources and value for money, to optimise the use of their resources and to invest in teaching and

learning, taking into account the authority's purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements.

It is for headteachers and governors to determine at school level how to optimise the use of resources and maximise value for money.

There are significant variations in the effective management of resources between similar schools, and so it is important for schools to review their current expenditure, compare it to other schools and think about how to make improvements.

#### 5.5. Budget virement

Schools may vire budgets between ledger codes in the expenditure of their budgets within the criteria determined by the authority. Governors are advised to establish financial limits above which the approval of the governors is required. Schools are also advised to refer to paragraph 4.2 when considering virement between cost centres.

#### 5.6. Audit General

Schools are required to co-operate with the audit regimes determined by the authority as regards internal audit, and the authority's external audit as determined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Schools must provide access to the school's records for both internal and external auditors.

The depth and frequency of internal audit coverage of individual schools will depend on an assessment of each school's strength in financial management and by reference to the School's SFVS annual return. The authority's Internal Audit service will contact each school to arrange the appropriate audit coverage.

Schools operating outside the authority's financial system (non imprest schools) and producing their own accounts are required to commission an external audit if the local authority requests it.

Different audit arrangements may also be applied to schools having their own bank account, compared with non-bank account schools.

#### 5.7. Separate external audits

There is no expectation by the Secretary of State that routine annual external audit at school level should take place but where a school wishes to seek an additional source of assurance at its own expense, a governing body is permitted to spend funds from its budget share to obtain external audit certification of its accounts, separate from any authority internal or external audit process.

#### 5.8. Audit of voluntary and private funds

Schools are required to provide audit certificates in respect of voluntary and private funds held by the school and of the accounts of any trading organisations controlled by the school.

The purpose of such a provision is to allow the authority to satisfy itself that public funds are not being misused.

A school refusing to provide audit certificates to the authority as required by the scheme is in breach of the scheme and the authority can take action on that basis. Access to the accounts of such funds by other agencies is a matter for them. Any other requirement as to audit of such funds is a matter for those making the funds available, and any Charity Commission requirements.

#### 5.9. Register of business interests

The governing body of each school is required to maintain a register which lists for each member of the governing body and the headteacher:

- a) any business interests they or any member of their immediate family have
- b) details of any other educational establishments that they govern
- c) any relationship between school staff and members of the governing body

And to keep the register up to date with notification of changes and through annual review of entries, to make the register available for inspection by governors, staff, parents and the authority and to publish the register, for example on a publicly accessible website.

#### 5.10. Purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements

Schools are required to abide by the authority's financial rules and standing orders in purchasing, tendering and contracting matters. This includes a requirement to assess in advance the professional competence of any contractors in areas such as compliance with health and safety regulations, safeguarding practices etc., taking account of the authority's policies and procedures.

However any section of the authority's financial rules and standing orders must be **disapplied** if it requires schools:

- a) to do anything incompatible with any of the provisions of this scheme, any statutory provision, or anything which did not comply with The Public Contracts Regulations;
- b) to seek local authority officer countersignature for any contracts for goods or services for a value below £60,000 in any one year;
- c) to select suppliers only from an approved list;
- d) or would permit schools to seek fewer than three tenders or quotations in respect of any contract with a value exceeding £10,000 in any one year, subject to specific listed exceptions.

The fact that an authority contract has been let in accordance with Public Contracts Regulations procedures does not in itself make it possible to bind a school into being part of that contract. For the purposes of the procurement directives schools are viewed as discrete contracting authorities.

The countersignature requirement should be applied sensibly by authorities and schools alike, avoiding attempts to artificially aggregate or disaggregate orders to avoid or impose the requirement.

Schools may seek advice on a range of compliant deals via [Buying for schools](#).

#### 5.11. Application of contracts to schools

Schools are free to opt out of authority arranged contracts.

Although governing bodies are empowered under paragraph 3 of schedule 1 to the Education Act 2002 to enter into contracts, in most cases they do so on behalf of the authority as the maintainer of the school and owner of the funds in the budget share (this is the main reason for allowing authorities to require authority counter-signature of contracts exceeding a certain value).

However, some contracts may be made solely on behalf of the governing body, when the governing body has clear statutory obligations e.g. contracts made by aided or foundation schools for the employment of staff.

#### 5.12. Central funds and earmarking

The authority is authorised to make sums available to schools from central funds, in the form of allocations which are additional to and separate from the schools' budget shares.

Such allocations should be subject to conditions setting out the purpose or purposes for which the funds may be used; and while these conditions need not preclude virement (except where the funding is supported by a specific grant which the authority itself is not permitted to vire), this should not be carried to the point of assimilating the allocations into the school's budget share.

Such allocations might, for example, be sums for SEN or other initiatives funded from the central expenditure of the authority's schools budget or other authority budget.

Such earmarked funding from centrally-retained funds is to be spent only on the purposes for which it is given, or on other cost centres for which earmarked funding is given, and is not to be vired into the school's budget share. Schools should maintain an accounting mechanism in order to demonstrate that this requirement has been met.

Unless previously agreed with the Executive Director – Children and Family Services, schools are required to return to the authority any earmarked funds if not spent within the period over which schools are allowed to use the funding as stipulated by the authority.

The authority is not allowed to make any deduction, in respect of interest costs to the authority, from payments to schools of devolved specific grant.

### 5.13. Spending for the purposes of the school

Section 50(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 allows governing bodies to spend budget shares for the purpose of the school, subject to the regulations made by the Secretary of State and any provisions of the scheme.

From 1 April 2011, under section 50(3a) amounts spent by governing bodies on community facilities or services under section 27 of the Education Act 2002 will be treated as spent for the purposes of the school.

Under section 50(3)(b) the Secretary of State may prescribe additional purposes for which expenditure of the budget share may occur. Such regulations are prescribed in the School Budget Shares (Prescribed Purposes) (England) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/378) which have been amended by the School Budget Shares (Prescribed Purposes) (England) Amendment Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/190).

These allow schools to spend their budgets on pupils who are on the roll of other maintained schools or academies.

### 5.14. Capital spending from budget shares

Governing bodies are permitted to use their budget shares to meet the cost of capital expenditure on the school premises. This includes expenditure by the governing body of a voluntary aided school on work which is their responsibility under paragraph 3 of schedule 3 of the act.

Schools must notify the authority of all proposed capital spending from their budget share. It is recommended that schools discuss their proposals with the authority (both an education and a finance expert) prior to the final authorisation of such proposals and in particular that they ensure that the proposed works do not already form part of the council's approved capital programme.

In any event if the expected capital expenditure from the budget share in any one year will exceed £20,000, the governing body must;

- notify the authority in a timely fashion and
- take into account any advice from the Executive Director - Children and Family Services as to the merits of the proposed expenditure.

Where the premises are owned by the authority, or the school has voluntary controlled status, then the governing body shall seek the consent of the authority to the proposed works. However, consent will only be withheld on health and safety grounds.

The reason for these requirements is to help ensure compliance with the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Equality Act 2010, and the Building Regulations 2010.

These provisions would not affect expenditure from any capital allocation made available by the authority outside the delegated budget share.

## 5.15. Notice of concern

The authority may issue a notice of concern to the governing body of any school it maintains where, in the opinion of the Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Director – Children and Family Services, the school has failed to comply with any provisions of the scheme, or where actions need to be taken to safeguard the financial position of the authority or the school.

The purpose of this provision is to enable the authority to set out formally any concerns it has regarding the financial management of a school it maintains and require a governing body to comply with any requirements the authority deems necessary.

Such a notice will set out the reasons and evidence for it being made and may place on the governing body restrictions, limitations or prohibitions in relation to the management of funds delegated to it.

A notice may be issued in the following circumstances:

1. When a school fails to comply with the conditions of a licensed deficit.
2. When a school does not have a robust plan to repay the deficit within a maximum of five years.
3. When monitoring meetings identify an unrealistic deficit recovery plan without any contingency plans, and failure to take on board the recommendations made by the local authority.
4. When a school's deficit is budgeted to exceed 5% of its budget share\*.
5. When a school's deficit continues to grow and the repayment period increases.

\*Budget Share is the budget allocation determined through the local funding formula.

The notice requires the following:

- Insisting that relevant staff undertake appropriate training to address any identified weaknesses in the financial management of the school.
- Insisting that an appropriately trained/qualified person chairs the finance committee of the governing body.
- Placing more stringent restrictions or conditions on the day to day financial management of a school than the scheme requires for all schools – this includes the provision of monthly accounts to the authority, with detailed explanations to variances both to budget and to the previous month.
- An expectation to attend regular financial monitoring meetings when requested by local authority officers.
- Requiring the governing body to buy into the authority's financial management systems (currently FMS) and the Schools Accountancy buy back service if it hasn't already done so.
- Requiring a school to submit monthly income projections and/or financial monitoring reports on any out of hours provision. If there are financial



concerns, this may lead to the local authority imposing restrictions or limitations on the manner in which the provision is run.

These requirements must be complied from the date of issue of the notice.

Any notice of concern issued by the authority will be withdrawn once the authority agrees the governing body has:

- Complied with the requirements of the notice,
- Implemented a robust and realistic deficit recovery plan to repay any deficit within five years,
- Reduced any deficit to below 5% of budget share.

The powers of intervention if the school does not comply with the notice are set out in Sections 63 to 66 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. This enables the local authority to:

1. Require the governing body to enter into a particular arrangement for specified services of an advisory nature with a specified person.
2. Appoint additional governors.
3. Appoint an Interim Executive Board (subject to consent from the Secretary of State).
4. Suspend the governing body's right to a delegated budget.

Other options may include LA authorisation required for all purchase orders and/or LA authorisation for all staffing appointments.

It shall not be used in place of withdrawal of financial delegation where that is the appropriate action to take; however, it may provide a way of making a governing body aware of the authority's concerns short of withdrawing delegation and identifying the actions a governing body should take in order to improve their financial management to avoid withdrawal.

#### 5.16.Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

All local authority maintained schools (including nursery schools and PRUs that have a delegated budget) must demonstrate compliance with the SFVS and complete the assessment form on an annual basis. It is for the school to determine at what time of the year they wish to complete the form.

Governors must demonstrate compliance through the submission of the SFVS assessment form signed by the Chair of Governors. The form must include a summary of remedial actions with a clear timetable, ensuring that each action has a specified deadline and an agreed owner. Governors must monitor the progress of these actions to ensure that all actions are cleared within specified deadlines.

All maintained schools with a delegated budget must submit the form to the authority before the end of the financial year (31<sup>st</sup> March).

#### 5.17.Fraud

All schools must have a robust system of controls to safeguard themselves against fraudulent or improper use of public money and assets.

The governing body and the headteacher must inform all staff of school policies and procedures related to fraud and theft, the control in place to prevent them; and the consequences of breaching these controls. This information must also be included in induction for all new school staff and governors.

## **6. Instalments of Budget Share: Banking Arrangements**

The authority has adopted the “CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities”.

For the purposes of this section, budget share includes place-led funding for special schools, resource units and PRUs.

### **6.1. Frequency of instalments**

Schools with their own bank accounts will receive monthly instalments of their budget share normally on the Monday before the last Thursday of each month.

Schools that use West Berkshire’s Imprest system will have an imprest limit set based on a monthly instalment of their budget share less any central payments e.g. payroll.

Top-up payments for pupils with high needs will be made on a termly basis unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with the relevant provider.

### **6.2. Proportion of budget share payable at each instalment**

Budget share payments to schools with their own external bank account will be made in accordance with the schedule of payment agreed with individual schools and the Service Lead, Finance, Property and Procurement; normally the monthly payment will be equal to one twelfth of the schools approved budget share, except for month one where an additional one third of the normal monthly payment is paid at the beginning of the month, and month twelve where two thirds of the normal monthly payment is paid.

Schools on the imprest system which use an external payroll provider will make their salary payments through their imprest account and reclaim the expenditure retrospectively. The imprest limit will reflect this payment.

6<sup>th</sup> form funding and other Education Funding Agency (EFA) grants such as pupil premium will be paid according to the schedule and receipt of the grant from the EFA.

### **6.3. Interest clawback**

Where a school requests and the authority agrees to make available the budget share in advance (of what the authority believes to be reasonable cash flow needs taking account of the pattern of expenditure of schools of that size, and any particular representations relating to the individual school’s circumstances), the authority may deduct from the budget share an amount equal to the estimated interest lost by the authority.

The calculation basis will be at a rate up to 2 per cent above the bank base rate at the time of the advance.

#### 6.4. Interest on late budget share payments

The authority will add interest to budget share payments which are late as a result of authority error.

The interest rate used will be that used for clawback calculations in 6.3 above or if no such clawback mechanism is in place, at least the current Bank of England base rate.

#### 6.5. Budget share for closing schools

Budget shares of schools for which approval for discontinuation has been secured, will be made available until closure on a monthly basis, net of estimated pay costs, even where some different basis was previously used.

#### 6.6. Bank and building society accounts

Bank accounts as referred to here, do not include imprest bank accounts.

All maintained schools may have an external bank account into which their budget share instalments (as determined by other provisions) are paid and any interest payable on the account can be retained by the school.

Where a school opens an external bank account, the authority must, if the school desires, transfer immediately to the account an amount agreed by both school and authority as the estimated surplus balance held by the authority in respect of the school's budget share, on the basis that there is a subsequent correction when the accounts for the relevant year are closed.

Any school in deficit requesting an external bank account shall not be able to have one until any deficit is cleared.

New bank account arrangements may only be requested with effect from the beginning of each financial year provided two months' notice has been given.

#### 6.7. Restriction of accounts

The banks or building societies with which schools may hold an account for the purpose of receiving budget share payments must be as per the approved list consistent with the authority's Treasury Management Policy.

Any school closing an account used to receive its budget share and opening another must select the new bank or building society which meets the criteria set out in this paragraph even if the closed account was with an institution which did not.

Schools are allowed to have bank accounts for budget share purposes which are in the name of the school rather than the authority. The account mandate should provide that the authority is;

- the owner of the funds in the account,
- entitled to receive statements on request, and
- can take control of the account if the school's right to a delegated budget is suspended by the authority.

Budget share funds paid by the authority and held in school accounts remain authority property until spent (section 49 (5) of the act).

Signatories for external bank accounts are restricted to authority and school employees only. No account should be restricted to authority employees only, because this is not practicable for foundation or aided schools. Governors who are not members of staff are barred from being signatories.

## 6.8. Borrowing by schools

With the exception of loan schemes run by the authority (7.10) and the financial instruments outlined in the scheme (section 5.10), governing bodies may borrow money (which includes the use of finance leases) only with the written permission of the Secretary of State. The introduction of IFRS16 for local authorities from 1 April 2024 ends the distinction between operating and finance leases at maintained schools for accounting purposes. Under the Education Act 2002, all leases will be classed as borrowing and will require the Secretary of State for Education's consent.

Details of all such requests and subsequent approvals or otherwise should be supplied in writing to the authority's Chief Finance Officer.

The Secretary of State has, however, agreed to provide blanket consent to a range of the most common leasing activities, as set out in the [Leasing for maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk). Leases not included in this Order will still require the written consent of the Secretary of State, and it remains the general position that schools will only be granted permission for other types of borrowing in exceptional circumstances. From time to time, however, the Secretary of State may introduce limited schemes to meet broader policy objectives. The Secretary of State's general position is that schools will only be granted permission for borrowing in exceptional circumstances. From time to time, however, the Secretary of State may introduce limited schemes in order to meet broader policy objectives.

Schools may use any scheme that the Secretary of State has said is available to schools without specific approval.

Schools are barred from using interest bearing credit cards and overdrafts (external bank accounts) which are regarded as borrowing. However, schools may use a Government Procurement Card in order to facilitate electronic purchases. Schools are required to adhere to the authority protocol on the use of procurement cards. No interest charges should be incurred by the school, with balances fully cleared on a monthly basis.

The restrictions do not apply to Trustees or Foundations, whose borrowing as private bodies makes no impact on government accounts. These debts may not be serviced directly from delegated budgets, but schools are free to agree a charge for a service which the Trustees or Foundation are able to provide as a consequence of their own borrowing.

Governing bodies do not act as agents of the authority when repaying loans.

This provision does not apply to loan schemes run by the authority.

## 6.9. Other Provisions

### Leasing arrangements

Schools must seek advice from Accountancy before entering into any lease agreements.

## 7. The Treatment of Surplus and Deficit Balances in Relation to Budget Shares

### 7.1. Right to carry forward surplus balances

Schools must carry forward from one financial year to the next any surplus in net expenditure relative to the school's budget share for the year plus/minus any balance brought forward from the previous year.

If a school requests to set up its own external bank account, an amount will be paid into the school's new account on the 1 April representing any invested balances held by the council on behalf of the school, plus an estimate of any underspend in the financial year immediately prior to the opening of the account. If the school is expected to overspend in the preceding financial year, the amount of the estimated overspend will be deducted from the invested balances transferred to the new account. The estimate of any under or over spend will be agreed between the authority and the school. When the school's final outturn position for the previous financial year is known and agreed between the authority and the school, an adjustment will, if necessary, be made to the opening balance paid into the account by adding to or deducting an amount from the next instalment of the school's budget share to be paid into its bank account.

The amount of a surplus balance would be shown in the relevant outturn statement published in accordance with directions given by the Secretary of State under section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009; although there may be commitments against any figure shown in such a statement.

### 7.2. Controls on surplus budgets

Although schools have the autonomy to plan for and use their funding in the way that best meets the purposes of their school, they should not be carrying forward significant excessive surplus balances which are uncommitted and without a plan for their use. An excessive balance for this purpose is deemed to be 10% of the school's budget share for the financial year or £50,000, whichever sum is the greatest.

In order to control surplus balances, the authority will report the balances held by each school at the end of the financial year to the schools' forum (during the summer term), alongside the actual and planned balance for the previous three years and any other data deemed to be of relevance.

Individual schools with excessive balances should provide further information on a School Balance Statement, to be reviewed by the Heads Funding Group to ensure information surrounding commitments is justified and reasonable. Any uncommitted balance and anything in the statement that it is deemed should be covered by future budgets rather than balances, could be subject to clawback.

The maximum that could be clawed back each year is the amount of school balance in excess of 10% of their budget share, subject to leaving the schools with a minimum balance of £50,000. The actual amount of clawback will be recommended by Heads Funding Group to Schools Forum.

The first clawback will be based on balances at 31.3.2025. **Subject to discussion at Schools Forum.**

### 7.3. Interest on surplus balances

Balances held by the authority on behalf of schools will attract no interest unless it is invested in the authority's reserve account where this accrues directly to the school. The rate of interest paid will be based on the average rate earned by the council on its investments.

### 7.4. Obligation to carry forward deficit balances

Deficit balances will be carried forward by the deduction of the relevant amounts from the following year's budget share.

The deficit balance would be shown on the outturn statement published in accordance with directions given by the Secretary of State under section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009; although this might be shown gross of committed expenditure and therefore appear lower than would otherwise be the case.

Schools closing the financial year with an unplanned deficit, though setting a balanced budget for the current year, may be asked to submit the same additional information (for one year only) as those schools with a licensed deficit (see paragraph 7.9) and will be notified accordingly.

### 7.5. Planning for deficit budgets

Schools must submit a recovery plan to the authority when they have a revenue deficit at 31 March of any year.

Schools may only plan for a deficit budget in accordance with the terms of paragraph 7.9 below.

### 7.6. Charging interest on deficit balances

The authority may charge interest on any deficit balance at the bank base rate depending on the reason why the deficit has occurred. The Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Service Director – Children & Family Services will

determine whether or not interest will be payable and will advise the school accordingly when the deficit is approved.

#### 7.7. Writing off deficits

The authority has no power to write off the deficit balance of any school.

#### 7.8. Balances of closing and replacement schools

Where in the funding period, a school has been established or is subject to a prescribed alteration as a result of the closure of a school, the authority may add an amount to the budget share of the new or enlarged school to reflect all or part of the unspent budget share, including any surplus carried over from previous funding periods, of the closing school for the funding period in which it closes.

#### 7.9. Licensed deficits

The authority will permit schools to plan for a deficit budget in particular circumstances.

The funding to allow such a deficit budget shall be provided from the collective surplus of school balances held by the authority on behalf of schools, although it is open to the authority, in circumstances where there is no such surplus, to make alternative arrangements if it can do so within the relevant local authority finance legislation.

The detailed arrangements applying to this scheme are set out below:

- The recommended length over which schools may repay the deficit, i.e. reach at least a zero balance, with appropriate mechanism to ensure that the deficit is not simply extended indefinitely, is three years. The maximum length of repayment is five years.
- The deficit will only be agreed to allow a school in the short term to maintain a level of spend which, in the opinion of the Executive Director – Children & Family Services, is the minimum required to deliver the National Curriculum.
- The maximum size of the deficit in normal circumstances will not exceed 5% of the school's budget share.
- The maximum proportion of the collective balances held by the authority, which would be used to back the arrangement, shall not exceed 20%.
- Before a deficit budget is approved, the school must produce a detailed deficit recovery plan in the prescribed format for the duration of the planned period of the deficit, which will be reviewed at least annually.
- The school must meet with the authority at least every 6 months to review progress of the deficit recovery plan and attend schools forum if requested.

- The school must submit monthly budget monitoring reports to Schools Accountancy.
- The school must submit a copy of any governor meeting minutes (both draft and signed) where the budget is discussed (a member of the authority may also attend such meetings).
- The school must take part in
  - any review the Local Authority commissions on the school's budget deficit position and recovery plan, including a Schools Resource Management Advisor deployment paid for by the DfE and
  - the introduction and use of any additional analysis and data tools deemed appropriate including Integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP).
- The Executive Director – Children & Family Services, jointly with the Chief Finance Officer will be responsible for approving any deficit.

In circumstances where a school requires a budget share advance in order not to be to be overdrawn at their bank, this shall be treated as a cash advance and not a loan. This will have no effect on the school's budget and outturn statements.

#### 7.10. Loan Schemes

There is no loan scheme available.

#### Credit union approach

Schools may wish to group together to utilise externally held balances for a credit union approach to loans. Where schools choose to borrow money through such a scheme the authority will require audit certification of the running of the scheme.

## 8. Income

The basic principle is that schools should be able to retain income except in certain specified circumstances.

### 8.1. Income from lettings

Schools may retain income from lettings of the school premises which would otherwise accrue to the authority, subject to alternative provisions arising from any joint use or private finance initiative (PFI) or purchasing power parity (PPP) agreements.

Schools are allowed to cross-subsidise lettings for community and voluntary use with income from other lettings, provided the governing body is satisfied that this will not interfere to a significant extent with the performance of any duties imposed on them by the education acts, including the requirement to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.



Schools are required to have regard to directions issued by the authority as to the use of school premises as permitted under the act for various categories of schools.

Income from lettings of school premises should not normally be payable into voluntary or private funds held by the school. However, where land is held by a charitable trust, it will be for the school's trustees to determine the use of any income generated by the land.

## 8.2. Income from fees and charges

Schools may retain income from fees and charges except where a service is provided by the authority from centrally-retained funds. However, schools are required to have regard to any policy statements on charging produced by the authority.

## 8.3. Income from fund-raising activities

Schools may retain income from fund-raising activities.

## 8.4. Income from sale of assets

Schools may retain the proceeds of sale of assets, except in cases where the asset was purchased with non-delegated funds (in which case it should be for the authority to decide whether the school should retain the proceeds), or the asset concerned is land or buildings forming part of the school premises and is owned by the authority. Any retention of funds from the sale of land assets is subject to the consent of the Secretary of State, and any conditions the Secretary of State may attach to that consent relating to use of proceeds.

The retention of proceeds of sale for premises not owned by the authority will not be a matter for the scheme.

## 8.5. Administrative procedures for the collection of income

Schools shall, where possible, process income that accrues to the Authority (e.g. where a school has contracted with the Council meal service) in accordance with the authorities financial regulations see Constitution Part 9 – Financial Rules, Appendix F - Income

## 8.6. Purposes for which income may be used

Income from the sale of assets purchased with delegated funds may only be spent for the purposes of the school.

# 9. The Charging of School Budgets

## 9.1. General provision

The budget share of a school may be charged by the authority without the consent of the governing body only in circumstances set out in 9.3 below. The authority

shall consult a school as to the intention to so charge, and shall notify a school when it has been done.

The authority cannot act unreasonably in the exercise of any power given by this scheme, or it may be the subject of a direction under section 496 of the Education Act 1996. The authority shall make arrangements for a disputes procedure for such charges that will include both council member and headteacher representation.

For each of the circumstances in 9.3 below the authority would have to be able to demonstrate that the authority had necessarily incurred the expenditure now charged to the budget share. This means that where the authority cannot incur a liability because the statutory responsibility rests elsewhere, no charging is possible. Therefore the position on charging will vary between categories of school.

In some cases the ability to charge budget shares depends on the authority having given prior advice to the governing body.

Local authorities may de-delegate funding for permitted services without the express permission of the governing body, provided this has been approved by the appropriate phase representatives at the schools forum.

## 9.2. Charging of salaries at cost

The authority will charge salaries of school-based staff to school budget shares at actual cost.

## 9.3. Circumstances in which charges may be made

- Where premature retirement costs have been incurred without the prior written agreement of the authority to bear such costs (the amount chargeable being only the excess over any amount agreed by the authority).
- Other expenditure incurred to secure resignations where there is good reason to charge this to the school.
- Awards by courts and industrial tribunals against the authority or out of court settlements, arising from action or inaction by the governing body contrary to the authority's advice. Awards may sometimes be against the governing body directly and would fall to be met from the budget share. Where the authority is joined with the governing body in the action and has expenditure as a result of the governing body not taking authority advice, the charging of the budget share with the authority expenditure protects the authority's position. Authorities should ensure in framing any such advice that they have taken proper account of the role of aided school governing bodies.
- Expenditure by the authority in carrying out health and safety work or capital expenditure for which the authority is liable where funds have been delegated to the governing body for such work, but the governing body has failed to carry out the required work.

- Expenditure by the authority incurred in making good defects in building work funded by capital spending from budget shares, where the premises are owned by the authority, or the school has voluntary controlled status.
- Expenditure by the authority incurred in insuring its own interests in a school where funding has been delegated but the school has failed to demonstrate that it has arranged cover at least as good as that which would be arranged by the authority. The authority itself needs to consider whether it has an insurable interest in any particular case.
- Recovery of monies due from a school for services provided to the school, where a dispute over the monies due has been referred to a disputes procedure set out in a service level agreement and the result is that monies are owed by the school to the authority.
- Recovery of penalties imposed on the authority by the Board of Inland Revenue, the Contributions Agency, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Teachers' Pensions, the Environment Agency or other regulatory authorities as a result of school negligence.
- Correction of authority errors in calculating charges to a budget share (e.g. pension deductions). Before applying any such provision the authority should consider whether it is reasonable to do so. If the error dates back several years it may be questionable whether such charging is reasonable.
- Additional transport costs incurred by the authority arising from decisions by the governing body on the length of the school day, and/or failure to notify the authority of non-pupil days resulting in unnecessary transport costs.
- Legal costs which are incurred by the authority because the governing body did not accept the advice of the authority.
- Costs of necessary health and safety training for staff employed by the authority, where funding for training had been delegated but the necessary training not carried out.
- Compensation paid to a lender where a school enters into a contract for borrowing beyond its legal powers, and the contract is of no effect.
- Cost of work done in respect of teacher pension remittance and records for schools using non-authority payroll contractors, the charge to be the minimum needed to meet the cost of the authority's compliance with its statutory obligations.
- Costs incurred by the authority in securing provision specified in an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) where the governing body of a school fails to secure such provision despite the delegation of funds in respect of low cost high incidence SEN and/or specific funding for a pupil with high needs.

- Costs incurred by the authority due to submission by the school of incorrect data.
- Recovery of amounts spent from specific grants on ineligible purposes.
- Costs incurred by the authority as a result of the governing body being in breach of the terms of a contract.
- Costs incurred by the authority or another school as a result of a school withdrawing from a cluster arrangement, for example where this has funded staff providing services across the cluster.
- Costs incurred by the authority in administering admission appeals, where the authority is the admissions authority and the funding for admission appeals has been delegated to all schools as part of their formula allocation.

## 10. Taxation

### 10.1. Value Added Tax (VAT)

VAT amounts reclaimed through the appropriate procedure below will be passed back to the school.

- a) Schools with an Imprest bank account should reclaim the net of VAT paid and VAT charged by submitting (at least monthly except for August) an Imprest Claim to the authority, once checked the reimbursement is paid by the authority to school's Imprest bank account. More detailed guidance on how to claim and timescales is available electronically at SLA Online.

or

- b) Non imprest schools should claim the net of VAT paid and VAT charged by submitting (at least monthly except for August) an appropriately authorised VAT Submittal form generated by the school's accounting system. Correctly completed VAT submittals received by 12 noon on a Tuesday will normally be included on that week's weekly payment sheet, so the school's bank account will be reimbursed the following Tuesday.

HMRC has agreed that VAT incurred by schools when spending any funding made available by the authority is treated as being incurred by the authority and qualifies for reclaim by the authority.

This does not include expenditure by the governors of a voluntary aided school when carrying out their statutory responsibilities to maintain the external fabric of their buildings. See section 15 below.

Maintained schools should seek advice of the WBC Schools Accountancy team in relation to VAT if there is any doubt as to how a particular transaction should be treated.

### 10.2. Construction Industry Taxation Scheme (CIS)

Schools are required to abide by the procedures issued by the authority in connection with CIS.

## **11. The Provision of Services and Facilities by the Authority**

### **11.1. Provision of services from centrally-retained budgets**

The authority shall determine on what basis services from centrally-retained funds (including existing commitments for premature retirement costs and redundancy payments) will be provided to schools.

The authority is barred from discriminating in its provision of services on the basis of categories of schools, except in cases where this would be allowable under the School and Early Years Finance Regulations or the dedicated schools grant (DSG) conditions of grant.

### **11.2. Provision of services bought back from authority using delegated budgets**

The term of any arrangement with a school to buy services or facilities from the authority shall be limited to a maximum of three years from the inception of the scheme or the date of the agreement, whichever is the later, and periods not exceeding five years for any subsequent agreement relating to the same services.

There is an exception in the case of contracts for the supply of catering services which shall be limited to a maximum of 5 years, which may be extended for a maximum of 7 years.

Services provided to schools, for which funding is not retained centrally by the authority (under the regulations made under section 45A of the act) will be offered at prices which are intended to generate sufficient income to cover the cost of providing those services. The total cost of those services will be met by the total income, even if schools are charged differentially.

### **11.3. Packaging**

The authority may provide any services for which funding has been delegated. But where the authority is offering the service on a buyback basis it must do so in a way that does not unreasonably restrict schools' freedom of choice among the services available. Where practicable, this will include provision on a service-by-service basis as well as in packages of services.

This provision will not prevent the authority offering packages of services which offer a discount for schools taking up a wider range of services.

### **11.4. Service level agreements**

Service level agreements for services to be provided by the authority to schools must be in place (i.e. signed and returned by headteachers/chairs of governor) by 31 March to be effective for the following financial year and schools will have at least a month to consider the terms of agreements prior to finalising them. In practice the authority will aim to make available any new service level agreements for the coming financial year by at least 1 January each year.

Where services or facilities are provided under a service level agreement, whether free or a buyback basis, the terms of any such agreement starting on or after the inception of the scheme will be reviewed at least every 3 years if the agreement lasts longer than that.

Services, if offered at all by the authority, shall be available on a basis that is not related to an extended agreement, as well as on the basis of such agreements.

Where such services are provided on an ad-hoc basis they may be charged for at a different rate than if those services were provided on the basis of an extended agreement.

Centrally-arranged provision for premises and liability insurance are excluded from the requirements as to service supply, as the limitations envisaged may be impracticable for insurance purposes.

### 11.5. Teachers' pensions

In order to ensure that the performance of the duty on the authority to supply Teachers' Pensions with information under the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014, the following conditions are imposed on the authority and governing bodies of all maintained schools covered by this scheme in relation to their budget shares.

These conditions only apply to governing bodies of maintained schools that have not entered into an arrangement with the authority to provide payroll services.

A governing body of any maintained school, whether or not the employer of the teachers at such a school, which has entered into any arrangement or agreement with a person other than the authority to provide payroll services, shall ensure that any such arrangement or agreement is varied to require that person to supply salary, service and pensions data to the authority which the authority requires to submit its monthly return of salary and service to Teachers' Pensions and to produce its audited contributions certificate.

A governing body of any maintained school which directly administers its payroll shall supply salary, service and pensions data to the authority which the authority requires to submit its monthly return of salary and service to Teachers' Pensions and to produce its audited contributions certificate.

The authority will advise schools each year of the timing, format and specification of the information required from each school. A governing body shall also ensure that AVCs are passed to the authority within the time limit specified in the AVC scheme. The governing body shall meet any consequential costs from the school's budget share.

## **12. Private finance initiative (PFI) / Public private partnerships (PPP)**

### 12.1. PF/PPP

It may be necessary to vary the terms of this scheme in the event of contracts being let under the framework for PF/PPP, in such cases the authority will undertake appropriate prior consultation.

## 13. Insurance

### 13.1. Insurance cover

If funds for insurance are delegated to any school, the authority may require the school to demonstrate that cover relevant to the authority's insurable interests, under a policy arranged by the governing body, is at least as good as the relevant minimum cover arranged by the authority if the authority makes such arrangements, either paid for from central funds or from contributions from schools' delegated budgets.

The evidence required to demonstrate the parity of cover will be reasonable, not place an undue burden upon the school, nor act as a barrier to the school exercising their choice of supplier.

The authority will have regard to the actual risks which might reasonably be expected to arise at the school in question in operating such a requirement, rather than applying an arbitrary minimum level of cover for all schools.

Instead of taking out insurance, a school may after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 join the Secretary of State's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for risks that are covered by the RPA. Schools may do this individually when any insurance contract of which they are part expires. Alternatively, all primary and/or secondary maintained schools may join the RPA collectively by agreeing through the schools forum to de-delegate funding.

## 14. Miscellaneous

### 14.1. Right of access to information

Governing bodies shall supply to the authority all financial and other information which might reasonably be required to enable the authority to satisfy itself as to the school's management of its delegated budget share, or the use made of any central expenditure by the authority on the school (e.g. earmarked funds).

### 14.2. Liability of governors

Because the governing body is a corporate body, and because of the terms of section 50(7) of the act, governors of maintained schools will not incur personal liability in the exercise of their power to spend the delegated budget share provided they act in good faith.

An example of behaviour which is not in good faith is the carrying out of fraudulent acts. Breaches of the scheme are not in themselves failures to act in good faith; neither is rejection of authority advice as to financial management.

### 14.3. Governors' allowances

#### Schools without delegated budgets

The authority may delegate to the governing body of a school yet to receive a delegated budget, funds to meet governors' expenses.

Governing bodies would not normally have discretion in the amounts of such allowances, which would be set by the authority.

#### Schools with delegated budgets

Under section 50(5) of the act, only allowances in respect of purposes specified in regulations made under section 19 of the Education Act 2002 may be paid to governors from a school's delegated budget share.

Schools are expressly forbidden from paying any other allowances to governors.

Schools are also barred from payment of expenses duplicating those paid by the Secretary of State to additional governors appointed by him to schools under special measures.

#### 14.4. Responsibility for legal costs

Legal costs incurred by the governing body may be charged to the school's budget share, unless the governing body acts in accordance with the advice of the authority; although this is the responsibility of the authority, as part of the cost of maintaining the school unless they relate to the statutory responsibility of voluntary aided school governors for buildings.

The effect of this is that a school cannot expect to be reimbursed for the cost of legal action against the authority itself; although there is nothing to stop an authority making such reimbursement if it believes this to be desirable or necessary in the circumstances.

The costs referred to are those of legal actions, including costs awarded against an authority; not the cost of legal advice provided.

In instances where there appears to be a conflict of interest between the authority and the governing body, schools are advised to obtain a list of suitably qualified firms of solicitors practicing in the area available from the Law Society, 113 Chancery Lane, London WC2, telephone number 0870 606 2500 or [www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)

#### 14.5. Health and Safety

In expending the school's budget share, governing bodies should have due regard to duties placed on the authority in relation to health and safety, and the authority's policy on health and safety matters in the management of the budget share.

#### 14.6. Right of attendance for Chief Finance Officer

Governing bodies are required to permit the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) of the authority, or any officer of the authority nominated by the Chief Finance Officer, to attend meetings of the governing body at which any agenda items are relevant to the exercise of their responsibilities.

The Chief Finance Officer's attendance shall normally be limited to items which relate to issues of probity or overall financial management and shall not be regarded as routine. The authority will give prior notice of the Chief Finance Officer intention to attend unless it is impracticable to do so.



#### 14.7.Special Education Needs

Schools are required to use their best endeavours in spending the budget share, to secure the special educational needs of their pupils.

If the authority is advised that this is not being achieved it may suspend delegation where a situation is serious enough to warrant it; this would not normally relate to an individual pupil.

#### 14.8.Interest on late payments

The terms of the scheme cannot affect statutory requirements now introduced on this matter.

#### 14.9.Whistle blowing

If any person working at a school, or a school governor, wishes to make a complaint about financial management or financial propriety at the school they should contact the Chief Finance Officer at the authority.

All complaints will be treated confidentially.

#### 14.10. Child protection

Schools should be prepared to release staff to attend child protection case conferences and other related events. Costs in this regard should be met from school delegated budgets.

#### 14.11. Redundancy / Early retirement costs

The 2002 Education Act sets out how premature retirement and redundancy costs should normally be funded.

The responsibility and procedure for the payment of redundancy/early retirement costs is set out in the West Berkshire Council School Severance Funding Policy, which can be accessed by schools on WBC SLA Online.

### **15.Responsibility for repairs and maintenance**

#### 15.1.Responsibility for repairs and maintenance

The authority delegates funding for repairs and maintenance to schools. Only capital expenditure is retained by the authority.

For these purposes, expenditure may be treated as capital only if it fits the definition of capital used by the authority for financial accounting purposes in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on local authority accounting.

The authority uses a de-minimis limit of £5,000 for defining capital in its own financial accounts, this sum applies to the total cost of the scheme and not individual items.

The same de minimus limit is used in defining what is delegated.

For voluntary aided schools, the liability of the authority for repairs and maintenance (albeit met by delegation of funds through the budget share) is the same as for other maintained schools, so no separate list of responsibilities is necessary for such schools.

However, eligibility for capital grant from the Secretary of State for capital works at voluntary aided schools depends on the *de-minimis* limit applied by DfE to categorise such work, not the *de-minimis* limit used by the authority.

## **16. Community facilities**

*Note: This section of the scheme does not extend to joint-use agreements; transfer of control agreements, or agreements between the authority and schools to secure the provision of adult and community learning.*

Schools which choose to exercise the power conferred by section 27 (1) of the Education Act 2002 to provide community facilities will be subject to controls. Regulations made under section 28 (2), if made, can specify activities which may not be undertaken at all under the main enabling power.

Section 88 of the Children and Families Act 2014, has removed the requirements in section 28(4) and section 28(5) of the Education Act 2002 for maintained schools in England. Under section 28(4) a school was obliged to consult the authority and under section 28(5) a school must have regard to advice or guidance from the Secretary of State or their authority when offering this type of provision.

Under section 28(1), the main limitations and restrictions on the power will be those contained in the maintaining authority's scheme for financing schools made under section 48 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by Paragraph 2 of Schedule 3 to the Education Act 2002 which extends the coverage of schemes to include the exercise of the powers of governing bodies to provide community facilities.

Schools are therefore subject to prohibitions, restrictions and limitations in the scheme for financing schools.

The mismanagement of community facilities funds can be grounds for suspension of the right to a delegated budget.

### **16.1. Consultation with the authority: financial aspects**

Changes made by the Children and Families Act 2014 mean that schools no longer need to consult the authority when establishing community facilities under Section 27 of the Education Act 2002. Nor do they have to have regard to advice given to them by their authority.

However, as public bodies, schools are expected to act reasonably, and this includes consulting those affected by decisions that they make.

### **16.2. Funding agreements: authority powers**

The provision of community facilities in many schools may be dependent on the conclusion of a funding agreement with a third party which will either be supplying funding or supplying funding and taking part in the provision. A very wide range of bodies and organisations are potentially involved.

Before concluding any such third party funding agreements, the Governing Body is required to submit detailed proposals to the Section 151 Officer for consideration by the authority at least eight weeks prior to signing any agreement.

The Secretary of State does not consider that it is appropriate for authorities to have a general power of veto for these agreements.

However, if a third party funding agreement has been or is to be concluded against the wishes of the authority, or has been concluded without informing the authority, which in the view of the authority is seriously prejudicial to the interests of the school or the authority, that may constitute grounds for suspension of the right to a delegated budget.

### 16.3. Other prohibitions, restrictions and limitations

Where the authority considers that such an agreement constitutes a significant financial risk, then the governing body may be required to make arrangements to protect the authority's financial interest. This may be by carrying out the activity concerned through the vehicle of a private limited company formed for the purpose or by obtaining indemnity insurance for risks associated with the project in question, as specified by the authority.

### 16.4. Supply of financial information

Schools which exercise the community facilities power should provide the authority with a statement at the end of P9, in a form determined by the authority, showing the income and expenditure for the school arising from the facilities in question for the year to date and on a forecast basis, for the remainder of the financial year.

If the authority has concerns about the financial arrangements for the provision of community use, then on giving notice to the school it may require such financial statements to be supplied every 3 months and, if the authority sees fit, to require the submission of a recovery plan for the activity in question.

Financial information relating to community facilities will be included in returns made by schools under the consistent financial reporting (CFR) framework, and these will be relied upon by the authority as its main source of information for the financial aspects of community facilities.

However, the CFR timetable is such that the authority is likely to want supplementary information in order to ensure that schools are not at financial risk. Schedule 15 of the act provides that mismanagement of funds spent or received for community facilities is a basis for suspension of the right to delegation of the budget share.

### 16.5. Audit

The school is required to grant access to the school's records connected with the exercise of the community facilities power, in order to facilitate internal and external audit of relevant income and expenditure.

Where funding agreements are entered into with third parties for the provision of community facilities, the school is required to ensure that provision is made for access by the authority to records and other property held on school premises, or held elsewhere insofar as they relate to the activity in question, in order for the authority to satisfy itself as to the propriety of expenditure on the facilities in question.

#### 16.6. Treatment of income and surpluses

Schools may retain all net income derived from community facilities except where otherwise agreed with a funding provider, whether that be the authority or some other person.

Schools may carry such retained net income over from one financial year to the next as a separate community facilities surplus.

#### 16.7. Health and safety matters

It will be the responsibility of the school's governing body to ensure that any health and safety provisions of the main scheme also apply to the community facilities power.

It will be the governing body's responsibility to meet the costs of securing Disclosure and Barring Service clearance, where appropriate for all adults involved in community activities taking place during the school day.

Governing bodies are free to pass on such costs to a funding partner as part of an agreement with that partner.

#### 16.8. Insurance

It is the responsibility of the governing body to ensure adequate arrangements are made for insurance against risks arising from the exercise of the community facilities power, taking professional advice as necessary.

Such insurance should not be funded from the school budget share. Schools should seek the authority's advice before finalising any insurance arrangement for community facilities.

In principle, the insurance issues arising from use of the community facilities power are the same as those which already arise from non-school use of school premises. However, a school proposing to provide community facilities should, as an integral part of its plans, undertake an assessment of the insurance implications and costs, seeking professional advice if necessary.

The authority is empowered to undertake its own assessment of the insurance arrangements made by a school in respect of community facilities, and if it judges those arrangements to be inadequate, make arrangements itself and charge the resultant cost to the school.

Such a provision is necessary in order for the authority to protect itself against possible third party claims.

Instead of taking out insurance, a school may join the RPA for risks that are covered by the RPA.

#### 16.9. Taxation

Schools should seek the advice of the authority and the local VAT office on any issues relating to the possible imposition of VAT on expenditure in connection with community facilities; including the use of the authority's VAT reclaim facility.

If any member of staff employed by the school or authority in connection with community facilities at the school is paid from funds held in a school's own bank account (whether a separate account is used for community facilities or not – see section 11), the school is likely to be held liable for payment of income tax and National Insurance, in line with HMRC rules.

School should follow authority advice in relation to the CIS where this is relevant to the exercise of the community facilities power.

#### 16.10. Banking

Schools should either maintain separate bank accounts for budget share and community facilities, or have one account but with adequate internal accounting controls to maintain separation of funds.

Schools should also have regard to the provisions at 6.6 and 6.7 above relating to the banks which may be used, signing of cheques, the titles of bank accounts, the contents of bank account mandates, and similar matters. The general approach to these matters should mirror the main part of the scheme.

## **Annex A: LIST OF SCHOOLS TO WHICH THIS SCHEME APPLIES**

### **PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Aldermaston Church of England Primary School  
Basildon Church of England Primary School  
Beedon Church of England Controlled Primary School  
Beenham Primary School  
Birch Copse Primary School  
Bradfield Church of England Primary School  
Brightwalton Church of England Aided Primary School  
Brimpton Church of England Primary School  
Bucklebury Church of England Primary School  
Burghfield St. Mary's Church of England Primary  
Calcot Infant School and Nursery  
Calcot Junior School  
Chaddleworth St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School  
Chieveley Primary School  
Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School  
Compton Church of England Primary School  
Curridge Primary School  
Downsway Primary School  
Enborne Church of England Primary School  
Englefield Church of England Primary School  
Falkland Primary School  
Garland Junior School  
Hampstead Norreys Church of England Primary School  
Hermitage Primary School  
Hungerford Primary School  
The Ilsleys Primary School  
Inkpen Primary School  
John Rankin Infant and Nursery School  
John Rankin Junior School  
Kennet Valley Primary School  
Kintbury St. Mary's Church of England Primary School  
Long Lane Primary School  
Mrs Bland's Infant School  
Mortimer St John's Church of England Infant School  
Mortimer St Mary's Church of England Junior School  
Pangbourne Primary School  
Parsons Down Infant and Nursery School  
Parsons Down Junior School  
Purley Church of England Infant School  
Robert Sandilands Primary School and Nursery  
Shaw-cum-Donnington Church of England Primary School  
Shefford Church of England Primary School  
Springfield Primary School  
Spurcroft Primary School  
St. Finian's Catholic Primary School  
St. John the Evangelist Infant and Nursery School  
St. Joseph's RC Primary

St. Nicolas Church of England Junior School  
St. Paul's Catholic Primary School  
Stockcross Church of England Primary School  
Streatley Church of England Voluntary Controlled School  
Sulhamstead & Ufton Nervet Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Thatcham Park Primary School  
Theale Church of England Primary School  
Welford & Wickham Church of England Primary School  
Westwood Farm Infant School  
Westwood Farm Junior School  
The Willows  
Winchcombe School  
Woolhampton Church of England Primary School  
Yattendon Church of England Primary School

### **SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

Brookfields Special School  
The Castle School

### **SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

The Downs School  
Little Heath School  
The Willink School

### **NURSERY SCHOOLS**

Hungerford Nursery School Centre for Children & Families  
Victoria Park Nursery School

### **PRUS**

iCollege –

- Inspiration (Key Stages 1 & 2)
- Integration (Key Stages 3 & 4)
- Intervention (Years 9 & 10)
- Independence (Year 11 and Key Stage 5)

## Annex B: GLOSSARY

“Chief Finance Officer”	Section 151 Officer (An officer appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires every local authority to appoint a suitably qualified officer responsible for the proper administration of its affairs.)
“the act”	School Standards and Framework Act 1998
“the authority”	West Berkshire Council
“the regulations”	School and Early Years Finance (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2018
AVC	Additional Voluntary Contributions
CFR	Consistent Financial Reporting
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance Association
CIS	Construction Industry Taxation Scheme
DfE	Department for Education
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant
HMRC	HM Revenues and Customs
ISB	Individual Schools Budget
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
SFVS	Schools Financial Value Standard
VAT	Value Added Tax



## **Annex C: EARLIER DIRECTED REVISIONS**

Following consultation that closed on 19 March 2012, the Secretary of State directs that from 1 April 2012 the text below should be incorporated into the schemes of all local authorities in England. The revised text was included in the 26 March 2013 version of the guidance.

### **Efficiency and value for money**

The scheme must include the following provision, which imposes a requirement on schools to achieve efficiencies and value for money, to optimise their resources and invest in teaching and learning, taking into account the purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements.

Schools must seek to achieve efficiencies and value for money, to optimize the use of their resources and to invest in teaching and learning, taking into account the local authority's purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements.

It is for heads and governors to determine at school level how to secure better value for money. There are significant variations in efficiency between similar schools, and so it is important for schools to review their current expenditure, compare it to other schools and think about how to make improvements

### **Schools financial value standard (SFVS)**

All local authority maintained schools, including nursery schools and PRUs that have a delegated budget) must demonstrate compliance with the SFVS and complete the assessment form on an annual basis. It is for the school to determine at which time of the year they wish to complete the form.

Governors must demonstrate compliance through the submission of the SFVS assessment form signed by the chair of governors. The form must include a summary of remedial actions with a clear timetable, ensuring that each action has a specified deadline and an agreed owner. Governors must monitor the progress of these actions to ensure that all actions are cleared within specified deadlines.

### **Fraud**

All schools must have a robust system of controls to safeguard themselves against fraudulent or improper use of public money and assets.

The governing body and head teacher must inform all staff of school policies and procedures related to fraud and theft, the controls in place to prevent them and the consequences of breaching those controls. This information must also be included in the induction for new school staff and governors.

Following consultation, the Secretary of State directs that from 19 August 2015 the text below shall be incorporated into the schemes of all local authorities in England.

### **Register of business interests**

The scheme must contain a provision which requires the governing body of each maintained school to have a register which lists for each member of the governing body and the head teacher:

- any business interests that they or any member of their immediate family have

- details of any other educational establishments that they govern
- any relationships between school staff and members of the governing body

And to keep the register up to date with notification of changes and through annual review of entries, to make the register available for inspection by governors, staff and parents, and the local authority, and to publish the register, for example on a publicly accessible website.

### **Borrowing by schools**

The scheme should contain a provision reminding schools that governing bodies may borrow money (which includes the use of finance leases) only with the written permission of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's general position is that schools will only be granted permission for borrowing in exceptional circumstances.

From time to time, however, the Secretary of State may introduce limited schemes in order to meet broader policy objectives. The scheme must contain a provision that allows schools to use any scheme that the Secretary of State has said is available to schools without specific approval, currently including the including the Salix scheme, which is designed to support energy saving.

Following consultation, the Secretary of State directs that from 22 March 2018 the text below shall be incorporated into the schemes of all local authorities in England.

### **Loan schemes**

Loans will only be used to assist schools in spreading the cost over more than one year of large one-off individual items of a capital nature that have a benefit to the school lasting more than one financial or academic year.

Loans will not be used as a means of funding a deficit that has arisen because a school's recurrent costs exceed its current income.

If loans are made to fund a deficit and a school subsequently converts to academy status, the Secretary of State will consider using the power under paragraph 13(4)(d) of Schedule 1 to the Academies Act 2010 to make a direction to the effect that such a loan does not transfer, either in full or part, to the new academy school.

### **Submission of financial forecasts**

Following consultation that closed on 30 September 2019, from the 2021 to 2022 funding year each school must submit a 3-year budget forecast each year, at a date determined by the local authority between 1 May and 30 June.

Following consultation that closed on 30 September 2019, the Secretary of State directs that the text below shall be incorporated into the schemes of all local authorities in England, however due to coronavirus (COVID-19) the directed revision to follow will only be expected to be enforced from the 2021 to 2022 funding year.

### **Planning for deficit budgets**

Schools must submit a recovery plan to the local authority when their revenue deficit rises above 5% at 31 March of any year. Local authorities may set a lower threshold than 5% for the submission of a recovery plan if they wish. The 5% deficit threshold will apply when deficits are measured as at 31 March 2024.

## Changes from Issue 15 of this guidance

**One update has been made to reflect current national policy positions and changes in legislation.**

### **Section 6.8 Borrowing by schools**

Guidance on borrowing has been updated to reflect the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standard 16 (IFRS16) and the Secretary of State providing blanket consent to certain categories of finance lease. The deletion of the final paragraph and addition of first paragraph.

The introduction of IFRS 16 has been postponed in relation to 2022 to 2023. *(final paragraph deleted)*

The introduction of IFRS16 for local authorities from 1 April 2024 ends the distinction between operating and finance leases at maintained schools for accounting purposes. Under the Education Act 2002, all leases will be classed as borrowing and will require the Secretary of State for Education's consent. *(first paragraph replaces deleted final paragraph)*

The amendment to the third paragraph from:

The Secretary of State's general position is that schools will only be granted permission for borrowing in exceptional circumstances. From time to time, however, the Secretary of State may introduce limited schemes in order to meet broader policy objectives.

To:

The Secretary of State has, however, agreed to provide blanket consent to a range of the most common leasing activities, as set out in the Leasing for maintained schools - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) . Leases not included in this Order will still require the written consent of the Secretary of State, and it remains the general position that schools will only be granted permission for other types of borrowing in exceptional circumstances. From time to time, however, the Secretary of State may introduce limited schemes to meet broader policy objectives.

The addition to paragraph five of:

No interest charges should be incurred by the school, with balances fully cleared on a monthly basis.

**The following updates have been made to better reflect current local policy positions and clarify information already contained in the scheme:**

### **Section 5.15 Notice of Concern**

This section has been updated in line with updates to the authority's policy on issuing a Notice of Concern, including clarification of when a notice may be issued and the requirements required once a notice is issued.

### **Section 7.2 Controls on surplus budgets**

Not updated, but to note that the first clawback will be based on balances as at 31.3.2025. **This is subject to the discussion on this item on the agenda.**

### **Section 7.7 Writing off deficits**

- 1) Removal of paragraph two below following closure of the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty fund:

In respect of mainstream maintained primary schools only, assistance may be given towards the elimination of a deficit balance from the de-delegated contingency budget, Primary Schools In Financial Difficulty (PSIFD) where this has been agreed by the schools forum.

# Proposed update to the Scheme for Financing Schools

## Consultation Document for Schools 18th June to 27th June 2024

- 1.1 Local authorities are required to publish schemes for financing schools which set out the financial relationship between the local authority and the schools they maintain.
- 1.2 The Department for Education (DfE) issues statutory guidance for local authorities on schemes for financing schools. The DfE guidance lists the provisions which a local authority must, should or may include. Local schemes need not follow the exact format used in the DfE guidance, except for the text of directed revisions. The DfE guidance is updated annually.
- 1.3 Issue 16 was published on 28 March 2024 and can be found at:  
  
[Schemes for financing local authority maintained schools 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schemes-for-financing-local-authority-maintained-schools-2024-to-2025)
- 1.4 In making any changes to the scheme, a local authority must consult all maintained schools in their area and receive the approval of the members of their schools forum representing maintained schools.
- 1.5 The local authority has reviewed the current scheme to ensure that all sections are still appropriate. Following on from this review four updates are proposed. The proposed Scheme for Financing Schools (2024 update) and Appendix B highlighting the proposed updates are attached to this email.
- 1.6 In order to respond to this consultation, please email your comments to [melanie.ellis@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:melanie.ellis@westberks.gov.uk) stating the corresponding paragraph number(s) at the start of each comment you make.
- 1.7 If a response is not received it will be assumed that the school has no comment to make and agrees the updated scheme.
- 1.8 The timetable for this consultation is as follows:

18th June to 27th June 2024	Consultation with Schools
2nd July 2024	Heads' Funding Group review responses
15 <sup>th</sup> July 2024	Schools' Forum approve revisions
16 <sup>th</sup> July 2024	Revised scheme comes into operation

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## Delivering Better Value Programme : Update

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<b>Report being considered by:</b>	Schools' Forum on 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2024		
<b>Report Author:</b>	Hester Collicutt		
<b>Item for:</b>	Discussion	<b>By:</b>	All Forum Members

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### 1. Purpose of the Report

This report is provided to Schools' Forum to provide an update on the Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV) and its impact on the SEND system in West Berkshire, improving outcomes for children and young people.

### 2. Introduction/Background

This report will outline the progress of the DBV Programme since confirmation of funding from the Department for Education (DfE) in April 2024.

West Berkshire is required to provide a formal quarterly progress update to the DfE and this will be presented to School's Forum at the meeting in July. There will be a requirement to report on the DBV Programme and the **Deficit Mitigation Plan** for the High Needs Block.

The quarterly reporting cycle to the DfE is as follows: -

- April to June by 5<sup>th</sup> July
- July to Sept by 4<sup>th</sup> October
- October to December by 10<sup>th</sup> January
- January to March by 4<sup>th</sup> April

### 3. Supporting Information

3.1 Fixed term contract staff are now in place to support the delivery of the DBV Programme: -

- DBV Service Director
- DBV Programme Manager
- DBV Commissioning Consultant
- DBV Data Analyst
- Communications and Engagement

3.2. The four working Groups of the DBV Programme are meeting monthly and tasks have been instigated according to the DBV Programme Plan: -

- Parent Carers Forum have been invited to all Task Groups however, due to capacity, they will only be involved at the **SEND Strategic Improvement Board** initially. To further support communication with parents and carers, West Berkshire has invested in the **Coram Parent Champion Programme**. The Parent Champion programme will extend our ability to engage with parents and carers during the remaining months of the DBV programme supporting the Gap Analysis /SEND Local Offer and the Inclusive Practice workstreams.  
Beyond the lifetime of the DBV programme, setting up a Parent Champion Programme in West Berkshire will create a network of parent carers volunteers that can be used to share and receive information and increase participation around multiple relevant service developments. For example, increasing take up of childcare entitlements for disadvantaged 2-year-olds, increasing access to early intervention services at Family Hubs for vulnerable families, increasing access and awareness of public health issues such as childhood immunisations.
- A draft **SEND Strategic Communications Plan** encompasses both, work under the DBV Programme, and the wider SEND and Inclusion Strategy under the collective strapline: “**Innovation in SEND.**” The draft Communications Strategy is likely to include an ‘Innovation in SEND’ blog / web page where we host all updates on DBV. This will be shared across multiple communication platforms to create broad reach across West Berkshire. Most importantly we can use it to engage with parents/carers and partners and later plan to create films and other blog updates about how we are progressing.
- A cross agency gap analysis is underway in relation to the Universal and Targeted Offer in West Berkshire in conjunction with health colleagues – e.g. review of the support available around Autism, pre and post diagnosis i.e. needs rather than diagnosis led access to provision.
- A **new SEND Data Set** will be embedded as an “enabler” in the 2024-2029 SEND and Inclusion Strategy to support improved reporting and data capture. This will allow for the development of a **SEND and Alternative Provision Sufficiency Strategy** to inform capacity development and financial monitoring of unit cost spend. The data team is also exploring the use of digital Portals to upload and access information online for professionals and families.
- Work on the Banding review will commence in June and schools will be contacted in relation to co-production opportunities in September, once a desk top review has been completed.
- A review of statutory decision-making processes is underway to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer.



- The whole school Mental Health Project is being revised, due to initial delays as a consequence of recruitment issues and it is likely that it will be launched in September 2024 and may extend beyond the end of March 2025 ( West Berkshire shall request that the funding allocated to this project, be carried over into the next financial year, in order to allow the project to run until July 2025 in the first instance).
- The Transition Support Programme is being developed and we will be seeking input from SENCOs, Year 7 and Early Years practitioners. In the meantime, the EDIT programme has been expanded, initially for one term, to target more vulnerable children transitioning into mainstream school.
- An audit of Schools' staff training needs is also being launched this month.

3.2 The DBV Programme is now fully aligned and incorporated into the new SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2029 to ensure the overarching delivery of "Innovation in SEND" programme in West Berkshire. This is a transformational piece of work which will have a significant legacy consequence for future years.

#### 4. Options for Consideration

4.1 There are risks to the programme and these need to be flagged as they emerge.

- SEND Local Area Inspection Preparation: Impacting on staff capacity to prioritise work in DBV Programme, potentially delaying implementation-**Mitigation:** DBV Programme is closely monitored, and additional capacity created through fixed term contract staff.
- Academisation of Special School in area: Impact on anticipated capacity development of additional places in specialist provision over the next 3 years. Sixteen additional Reception and Key Stage 3 placements will be required, if INMSS placements are used instead then this will have a significant impact on the Deficit Management Plan. **Mitigation:** Ensuring Sufficiency Task Group prioritising actions in capacity development in mainstream and alternative sites.

#### 5. Conclusion

5.1 The DBV Programme is proceeding at pace and is currently in line with the delivery schedule, but the anticipated SEND Local Area inspection will impact on delivery time during the inspection due to staff capacity. In addition, it may impact on delivery of actions post inspection if additional priorities are highlighted by the inspection team.

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## School Balances 2023/24

<b>Report being considered by:</b>	Schools' Forum on 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2024		
<b>Report Author:</b>	Melanie Ellis		
<b>Item for:</b>	Information	<b>By:</b>	All Maintained Schools Representative

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out for information purposes the year end balances for all maintained schools, highlighting those schools with a deficit or significant surplus.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To discuss the report and consider if further information is required on surplus balances.

### 3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 This report provides an overview of school balances at the end of 2023/24.
- 3.2 The Scheme for Financing Schools 2023/24 states: "In order to control surplus balances, the authority will report the balances held by each school at the end of the financial year to the Schools' Forum (during the Summer term), alongside the actual balance for the previous three years and any other data deemed to be of relevance." Individual schools with excessive balances may be required to provide further information on a School Balance Statement, to be reviewed by the Heads Funding Group. Clawback of balances in excess of 10% of the budget share (subject to leaving the schools with a minimum balance of £50,000) is to be introduced on balances at 31.03.25.

### 4. Overview of School Balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

- 4.1 Table 1 summarises the overall closing balances (all funds) of West Berkshire maintained schools compared to the previous year.

TABLE 1	As at 31st		Increase/(Decrease)	
	March 2023	March 2024	£'000	%
<b>Total Balances Summary</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>%</b>
Nursery Schools	170	238	68	39.7%
Primary Schools	4,747	4,146	(601)	(12.7%)
Secondary Schools	3,327	3,383	56	1.7%
Special Schools	5,005	4,998	(7)	(0.1%)
Pupil Referral Units	458	590	132	28.9%
<b>Total for all Schools</b>	<b>13,708</b>	<b>13,355</b>	<b>(352)</b>	<b>(2.6%)</b>

- 4.2 The school balances (revenue and capital) at 31st March 2024 total £13.4m, a decrease of £0.4m from 2022/23. Primary school balances and those of the Special Schools have decreased, with the balances in Nursery, Secondary and PRUs increasing year on year.

## School Balances 2023/24

4.3 Table 2 summarises the balances of West Berkshire maintained schools by fund.

2023/24 Balances by type of fund	Main School Budget	Pupil Premium	Sports Fund	Resource Units	Revenue Total	Community (Before & After school clubs)	Capital	Total Balances
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Nursery Schools	158	0	0	0	158	3	77	238
Primary Schools	2,802	142	149	42	3,135	343	668	4,146
Secondary Schools	3,001	0	0	0	3,001	0	382	3,383
Special Schools	4,652	175	33	0	4,860	10	128	4,998
Pupil Referral Units	552	0	8	0	560	0	30	590
<b>Total for all Schools</b>	<b>11,164</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>11,713</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>1,286</b>	<b>13,355</b>
2022/23 Balance	10,771	351	202	(14)	11,310	224	2,174	13,708
Increase/(Decrease)	393	(33)	(12)	56	404	132	(888)	(352)
%	3.6%	(9.5%)	(6.1%)	393.8%	3.6%	59.1%	(40.9%)	(2.6%)

4.4 In addition to £11.7m being held in revenue balances, £356k is held in before and after school club funds and £1.3m in capital balances.

- (1) Of the revenue balances, £318k is unspent pupil premium grant (though note that not all schools account for this separately and include within the main school budget), and £189k is unspent sports premium grant. All unspent sports funding must be spent by the end of this academic year (2023/24).
- (2) The £356k balance in the before and after school clubs is an increase on 2022/23 and builds upon the increase in the previous year.
- (3) Capital balances have reduced significantly. Additional funding to be spent on capital projects, prioritising projects that improve the school estate's energy efficiency, was received in January 2023. This totalled £1.1m. Many schools carried this forward into 2023/24 and this additional funding has now been spent.

4.5 Table 3 summarises the main school balances.

Main School Balances	As at 31st March 2023	As at 31st March 2024	Inc/(Dec)	Balance as a % of funding
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Nursery Schools	84	158	74	12%
Primary Schools	3,186	2,802	(384)	4%
Secondary Schools	2,494	3,001	507	11%
Special Schools	4,593	4,652	58	35%
Pupil Referral Units	414	552	138	16%
<b>Total for all Schools</b>	<b>10,771</b>	<b>11,164</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>10%</b>

- (1) Primary school balances have decreased for a second year in a row. The balance of £2,802k represents 4% of the main school funding. 25 primary schools have seen an increase in balances (£768k), and 27 a decrease (£1152k). A detailed breakdown per school is shown in Appendix A.
- (2) All three maintained secondary schools have an increased balance in 2023/24 (£507k). Appendix B provides details of these.

## School Balances 2023/24

- (3) The special schools main school balances have increased overall by £58k to £4.7m. However, Castle School balance has reduced by £300k so the increase overall is due to Brookfields balance increasing by £358k. Please see Appendix B for the breakdown by school.
- (4) The nursery school balance has increased although Hungerford Nursery has reported a further reduction to their balance. Appendix B provides details of the two balances.

## 5. Schools with Significant Surpluses

- 5.1 The Schools' Forum has agreed to reintroduce the claw back scheme for schools with excess surplus balances at 31.03.25. Information on high surplus balances is to be reported for 2023/24. Table 4 shows those schools with a main school surplus balance greater than 10% of their funding in 2023/24.

<b>TABLE 4 Main School Surplus Balances</b>	<b>As at 31st March 2023</b>	<b>As at 31st March 2024</b>	<b>Percentage of Funding %</b>	<b>Balance in excess of 10%</b>
<u>Nursery</u>				
Victoria Park Nursery	72,277	149,760	20%	74,431
<u>Primary</u>				
Beedon Primary	67,618	65,718	15%	22,949
Chaddleworth & Shefford Fed	87,012	86,479	12%	11,382
Curridge Primary	53,622	75,025	12%	12,833
Garland Junior	68,246	171,928	13%	44,333
John Rankin Schools Fed	414,775	503,665	16%	196,009
Parsons Down Federation	218,432	288,513	17%	114,134
Springfield Primary	352,615	400,089	23%	228,067
<u>Secondary</u>				
The Downs	1,211,610	1,467,308	17%	603,791
<u>Special</u>				
Brookfields Special School	3,445,943	3,804,042	51%	3,054,548
The Castle School	1,147,535	847,633	15%	268,564
<u>Pupil Referral Units</u>				
icollege	413,937	551,982	16%	204,890

All of the schools in the table above, with the exception of Curridge and Garland, also held a balance greater than 10% at 31.03.23

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 School reserves had been increasing overall year on year since 2017/18, when the reserves were £3.7m. The reduction reported for 2023/24 is the first, therefore, for a number of years and has been driven primarily by the decrease in the capital balances held by schools.

However, primary school main school balances have decreased for a second year in a row. The balance represents 4% of the main school funding. Given the continued combination of reduced pupil numbers, a reported growing number of children presenting with additional needs who are creating increasing budgetary pressure in schools and the removal of

additional funding to support education recovery, the primary school balances are forecast to continue to reduce in the coming year.

## **7. Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix A – Main School Budget Balances Maintained Primary Schools
- 7.2 Appendix B – Main School Budget Balances Maintained Other Schools

## School Balances 2023/24

Appendix A	Main School Budget Balance				Inc/Dec
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Primary Schools</b>					
Aldermaston Church of England Primary School	72,607	94,133	76,480	2,263	(74,217)
Basildon Church of England Primary School	(3,831)	(23,004)	(9,986)	29,151	39,136
Beedon Church of England (Controlled) Primary School	28,605	49,431	67,618	65,718	(1,901)
Beenham Primary School	(363)	20,936	(31,015)	(9,894)	21,121
Birch Copse Primary School	18,018	26,569	60,025	18,642	(41,383)
Bradfield Church of England Primary School	11,100	12,596	15,476	9,246	(6,230)
Brightwalton Church of England Aided Primary School	17,760	42,967	35,015	48,594	13,579
Brimpton Church of England Primary School	21,845	11,308	(30,834)	(14,162)	16,672
Bucklebury Church of England Primary School	22,471	2,712	(18,734)	21,238	39,973
Burghfield St Mary's Church of England Primary School	40,061	43,292	46,588	77,028	30,440
Calcot Schools Federation	151,376	220,266	198,116	175,182	(22,935)
Chaddleworth Shefford Federation Cof E Primary School	59,199	80,762	87,012	86,479	(533)
Chieveley Primary School	49,504	59,104	75,856	90,251	14,395
Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School	12,464	17,698	879	6,137	5,258
Compton Church of England Primary School	59,055	68,759	99,784	89,873	(9,911)
Curridge Primary School	60,163	82,835	53,622	75,025	21,403
Downsway Primary School	54,571	26,948	31,417	52,020	20,603
Enborne Church of England Primary School	15,184	3,574	0	(32,598)	(32,598)
Englefield Church of England Primary School	73,497	70,244	60,450	42,075	(18,374)
Falkland Primary School	273,962	329,663	188,834	105,890	(82,944)
Garland Junior School	53,059	35,046	68,246	171,928	103,682
Hampstead Norreys & The Ilsleys	10,311	12,493	68,065	95,029	26,965
Hermitage Primary School	19,019	(7,151)	1,911	(13,311)	(15,222)
Hungerford Primary School	87,029	106,570	111,060	159,448	48,388
Inkpen Primary School	8,819	(17,964)	5,782	36,075	30,293
John Rankin Schools Federation	387,427	445,104	414,775	503,665	88,891
Kennet Valley Primary School	48,726	82,901	50,592	3,875	(46,717)
Kintbury St Mary's Church of England Primary School	30,085	18,523	56,700	59,209	2,508
Long Lane Primary School	13,849	10,279	(76,173)	(29,745)	46,427
Mortimer Federation	35,100	49,510	63,658	82,899	19,241
Mrs Bland's Infant School	(12,613)	98,099	121,064	11,704	(109,360)
Pangbourne Primary School	15,341	3,804	520	(77,778)	(78,298)
Parsons Down Schools Federation	88,012	101,146	218,432	288,513	70,081
Purley Church of England Infant School	54,329	64,326	74,704	45,390	(29,314)
Robert Sandilands Primary School and Nursery	177,063	170,993	146,824	127,157	(19,668)
Shaw-cum-Donnington Church of England Primary School	5,407	4,973	16,737	8,253	(8,484)
Springfield Primary School	154,633	274,906	352,615	400,089	47,475
Spurcroft Primary School	(40,624)	(79,302)	(138,281)	(199,639)	(61,358)
St Finian's Catholic Primary School	(20,657)	0	(33,935)	(87,161)	(53,226)
St John & St Nics Federation	66,111	74,283	11,214	(47,172)	(58,387)
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	11,678	(7,173)	(85,585)	(158,621)	(73,036)
St Paul's Catholic Primary School	181,504	228,677	196,548	104,347	(92,201)
Streatley Church of England Voluntary Controlled School	31,501	13,960	19,451	29,266	9,815
Sulhamstead and Upton Nervet CofE VA Primary School	13,630	16,993	28,714	45,908	17,193
Thatcham Park Church of England Primary School	81,345	150,148	111,216	111,581	364
The Kite Federation	59,369	(37,097)	73,182	58,193	(14,988)
The Willows Primary School	138,622	232,354	129,060	47,375	(81,685)
The Winchcombe School	40,408	21,573	31,821	57,886	26,065
Theale Church of England Primary School	38,018	37,384	8,626	(39,994)	(48,620)
Westwood Farm Schools Federation	62,307	44,253	77,699	47,080	(30,618)
Woolhampton Church of England Primary School	13,505	23,094	39,782	(133)	(39,915)
Yattendon Church of England Primary School	27,037	22,423	14,086	22,545	8,460
<b>Total Primary Schools</b>	<b>2,916,597</b>	<b>3,435,921</b>	<b>3,185,714</b>	<b>2,802,018</b>	<b>(383,697)</b>

## School Balances 2023/24

Appendix B

Main School Budget Balance				Inc/Dec
2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
£	£	£	£	£

### Nursery Schools

Hungerford Nursery School Centre for Children and Families	48,209	42,439	12,082	8,319	(3,763)
Victoria Park Nursery School	119,985	98,679	72,277	149,760	77,483
<b>Total Nursery Schools</b>	<b>168,193</b>	<b>141,119</b>	<b>84,359</b>	<b>158,079</b>	<b>73,720</b>

Main School Budget Balance				Inc/Dec
2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	

### Secondary Schools

The Downs School	151,869	662,609	1,211,610	1,467,308	255,698
Little Heath School	644,072	607,454	603,436	716,598	113,163
The Willink School	581,741	707,494	678,716	816,683	137,967
<b>Total Secondary Schools</b>	<b>1,377,682</b>	<b>1,977,557</b>	<b>2,493,762</b>	<b>3,000,590</b>	<b>506,827</b>

### Special Schools

Brookfields Special School	879,012	2,027,795	3,445,943	3,804,042	358,100
The Castle School	527,828	749,418	1,147,535	847,633	(299,903)
<b>Total Special Schools</b>	<b>1,406,840</b>	<b>2,777,213</b>	<b>4,593,478</b>	<b>4,651,675</b>	<b>58,197</b>

### Pupil Referral Units

iCollege Alternative Provision	352,757	423,079	413,937	551,982	138,045
<b>Total PRUs</b>	<b>352,757</b>	<b>423,079</b>	<b>413,937</b>	<b>551,982</b>	<b>138,045</b>

<b>Total for all Schools</b>	<b>6,222,070</b>	<b>8,754,889</b>	<b>10,771,250</b>	<b>11,164,344</b>	<b>393,093</b>
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## Closure of School Insurance Buy Back Service

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**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Report Author:** Leah Rinaldi

**Item for:** Information      **By:** All School Members

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### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise the Schools' Forum of the closure of the School Insurance Buy Back Service and that no insurance buy back will be offered to schools from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. The relevant cost centre will be closed in 2025.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

### 3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 Maintained schools have been included in the Council's insurance arrangements since unitary status. Commercial insurance has been purchased and recharged to the schools.
- 3.2 Although long term agreements have been entered into with insurers, the premiums charged to schools have been affected by external pressures such as claims inflation and inflation generally.
- 3.3 The premium charged has been based on the individual school's property sum insured and salary figure.
- 3.4 Commercial insurance premiums are subject to Insurance Premium Tax, currently charged at 12%, which is passed onto the schools as a non-recoverable expenditure.
- 3.5 In 2014, the DfE introduced the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) scheme for maintained schools, to provide an alternative to commercial insurance for schools. The RPA is not insurance but a risk transfer mechanism.
- 3.6 The RPA rating is based on pupil numbers, i.e. a rate per pupil and as it is not insurance, it does not attract Insurance Premium Tax at 12%. The annual cost for the current financial year 2024/2025 is £25 per pupil and includes special and alternative provision academies, special schools and pupil referral units.
- 3.7 In 2014, 74 schools were included in the Council's arrangements. The number of participants has declined as schools join the RPA scheme and currently the number of schools in the Council's arrangements is 11.
- 3.8 The lack of participants in the Council's arrangements has put an unsustainable pressure on the revenue cost centre where the income target is unachievable. The

## Closure of School Insurance Buy Back Service

Council has had to subsidise the costs to schools from 2019/2020 onwards from Council reserves as below, but this is not a long-term option going forward.

policy year	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
No of schools joining RPA	3	31	9	8	6
Cost Centre Deficit (£)	24,394	106,899	203,598	10,715	124,426

- 3.9 The RPA offers schools a sustainable option to Council provided insurance and offers comparable cover to Council provided insurance.
- 3.10 The Engineering Inspection service will still be offered to schools as this is not currently provided by the RPA.

## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The remaining schools in the Council's arrangements should look at alternative schemes such as the Risk Protection Arrangement, with effect from 1 April 2025.

## 2023/24 Dedicated Schools Grant: Year End Outturn Report

**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Report Author:** Melanie Ellis

**Item for:** Information **By:** All Forum Members

### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To report on the outturn of the services funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), highlighting any under or over spends, and to highlight the cumulative deficit at 31 March 2024.

### 2. Recommendation

2.1 That the report be noted.

### 3. Background

3.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring fenced specific grant which can only be spent on school/pupil activity as set out in The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023. There are four DSG funding blocks: Schools, High Needs, Early Years and Central Schools Services.

3.2 The Local Authority and Schools' Forum are responsible for ensuring that the DSG is deployed correctly according to the Regulations. Monitoring of spend against the grant needs to take place regularly to enable decision making on deficits and surpluses and to inform future year budget requirements.

3.3 The way in which local authorities account for DSG deficits has been altered by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations 2020, made by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This requires DSG deficits to be held in a separate reserve in local authorities' accounts. However, the way in which local authorities should plan their management of DSG and report to DfE remains governed by the School and Early Years Finance Regulations 2023.

### 4. Year End Outturn

Table 1 - DSG Block forecast 2023/24	2023/24								
	Original Budget	Budget Changes	Final Budget	Quarter 1 Forecast	Quarter 2 Forecast	Quarter 3 Forecast	Month 10 Forecast	Month 12 Outturn	Deficit/ (surplus)
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Expenditure	115,656	828	116,484	118,892	120,300	120,282	120,897	120,487	4,003
Total Income	(115,656)	(711)	(116,366)	(115,656)	(115,656)	(115,656)	(116,117)	(115,985)	381
Net In-year Deficit	(0)	118	118	3,237	4,644	4,626	4,780	4,541	4,424
Deficit Balance in reserves	4,761		4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761
In year reserve movement	0	(118)	(118)	148	148	148	148	148	265
Cumulative Deficit	4,761	0	4,761	8,145	9,553	9,535	9,689	9,450	9,450

4.1 From previous years, there was a cumulative deficit of £4.761m.

- 4.2 The 2023/24 DSG expenditure budget was set £3.0m higher than available funding, and this was treated as an in-year deficit against the High Needs block.
- 4.3 The 2023/24 outturn position has increased the cumulative deficit position to £9.45m. This will be held in a separate reserve in the local authority accounts.

The year end position by block is shown in the chart below:

Table 1 - DSG Block forecast 2023/24	2023/24								Deficit/ (surplus)
	Original Budget	Budget Changes	Final Budget	Quarter 1 Forecast	Quarter 2 Forecast	Quarter 3 Forecast	Month 10 Forecast	Month 12 Outturn	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Expenditure:</b>									
Schools Block (inc ISB)	76,952	118	77,070	76,952	76,952	76,952	76,952	77,070	(0)
Early Years Block	10,848	711	11,559	10,848	10,849	10,849	11,483	11,325	(234)
Central School Services Block	973		973	966	967	954	950	935	(38)
High Needs Block	29,946	0	29,946	30,125	31,531	31,526	31,511	31,157	1,211
High Needs Block In-Year deficit recovery	(3,065)		(3,065)		0	0	0	0	3,065
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>115,656</b>	<b>828</b>	<b>116,484</b>	<b>118,892</b>	<b>120,300</b>	<b>120,282</b>	<b>120,897</b>	<b>120,487</b>	<b>4,003</b>
<b>DSG Grant Income:</b>									
Schools Block	(76,952)		(76,952)	(76,952)	(76,952)	(76,952)	(77,005)	(77,005)	(52)
Early Years Block	(10,848)	(711)	(11,559)	(10,848)	(10,848)	(10,848)	(11,252)	(11,115)	443
Central School Services Block	(973)		(973)	(973)	(973)	(973)	(973)	(973)	0
High Needs Block	(26,882)	0	(26,882)	(26,882)	(26,882)	(26,882)	(26,887)	(26,892)	(10)
<b>Total DSG Income</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(711)</b>	<b>(116,366)</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(116,117)</b>	<b>(115,985)</b>	<b>381</b>
In-year adjustments									
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(711)</b>	<b>(116,366)</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(115,656)</b>	<b>(116,117)</b>	<b>(115,985)</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>Net In-year Deficit</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>3,237</b>	<b>4,644</b>	<b>4,626</b>	<b>4,780</b>	<b>4,541</b>	<b>4,424</b>
Deficit Balance in reserves	4,761		4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761	4,761
In year reserve movement	0	(118)	(118)	148	148	148	148	148	265
<b>Cumulative Deficit</b>	<b>4,761</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,761</b>	<b>8,145</b>	<b>9,553</b>	<b>9,535</b>	<b>9,689</b>	<b>9,450</b>	<b>9,450</b>

## 5. Schools Block

- 5.1 The 2023/24 budget was funded from DSG grant of £77m. The Schools Block ended the year online, with £148k use of balances from the schools block reserve. De-delegated budgets were underspent by £118k, which will transfer to reduce the future cost of services.
- 5.2 The month ten reported position included balances for the growth fund and schools in financial difficulty, which have been funded from reserves.
- 5.3 £148k from the Schools Block reserve has been spent in year and an in-year movement of £118k, leaving a surplus balance of £1.1m. A breakdown is provided below:

Schools Block Reserve (surplus)/deficit	1.4.2023	change in reserves	In year deficit/ (surplus)	31.3.2024
	£k	£k	£k	£k
Growth Fund	(996)		180	(817)
Schools in Financial Difficulty	0		0	0
School Improvement	(189)	130	(23)	(82)
EMTAS	(69)	18	(23)	(75)
Therapeutic Thinking	(8)		(11)	(18)
CLEAPPS	0			0
Trade Union	0		0	0
Stat and Reg	(5)		(5)	(10)
Schools (re rates adj)	(87)		0	(87)
<b>Total Surplus Balance</b>	<b>(1,355)</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>(1,089)</b>

## 6. Early Years Block

- 6.1 Early Years Expenditure was underspent by (£234k), with a grant adjustment of £443k leaving a net overspend of £210k.
- 6.2 A deficit recovery programme is in place to reduce the current deficit over a 5 year period, starting from April 2021. Year 1 saw a reduction of £56k. Whilst the subsequent 2 years have not produced a saving, this has been due to a high pass through rate which we are seeking to reduce in the coming years.
- 6.3 The Early Years Block is difficult to predict due to the volatile nature of both the funding and payments to providers (payments are made according to actual number of hours of provision each term).
- 6.4 There are new entitlements for parents from 2024/25 and all of these new entitlements are subject to the same pass through rate.
- 6.5 The cumulative deficit on this block at the end of 2023/24 is £1.3m.

## 7. Central Schools Services Block

- 7.1 At year end, overall DSG funding received for the Central Schools Services Block was on budget and expenditure was underspent by £38k. This was mainly achieved from the Education Welfare Service due to one-off staff savings.
- 7.2 The cumulative deficit on this block at the end of 2023/24 has now decreased to £1k.

## 8. High Needs Block

- 8.1 At year end, overall DSG funding received was £10k higher than budget due to a higher than predicted import export adjustment.
- 8.2 The 2022/23 budget was set with a £3.0m deficit recovery target. The block overspent by £1.2m, leaving an in-year deficit of £4.2m. The main variances against expenditure are as follows:

- An overall overspend of £1.4m on top up funding. There has been a large saving against independent special schools (£601k) with a corresponding pressure against top up funding in mainstream schools (£924k) and resource units (£728k) as we seek to use more of our own provision to fund placements, including the new SEMH provision at Theale.
- There were also large overspends against top up fees for further education (£417k)
- Other high needs areas that offered savings included the medical tuition service as they had delays on recruitment to posts.
- Overall, the pressure on top up funding is due to an increase in the number of EHCP's, moving from 1348 to 1566 (March 23 to March 24). There is also a significant growth in Emotional Based School Avoiders (EBSA) and children with dysregulated behaviour. There are higher packages of support being funded in mainstream for children for whom special school places are not available.

8.3 The forecast at month 10 included £447k of placements within independent schools which have been delayed.

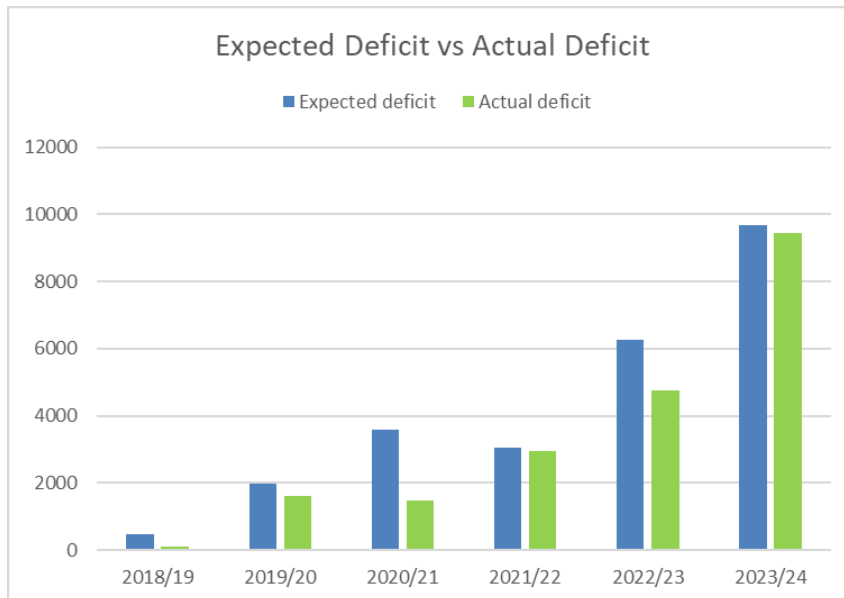
8.4 The cumulative deficit against this block is now £9.3m at the end of 2023/24.

## 9. Total Reserve Balance and cumulative deficit

9.1 The DSG now has a cumulative deficit of £9.5m. The High Needs Block deficit has increased by £4.3m to £9.3m. A £1m surplus in the schools block is reducing the overall total for the authority.

Reserve Balances (surplus)/deficit	1.4.2023 Actual	Change in reserves	In-year Deficit/ (Surplus)	31.3.2024 Actual
Schools Block - growth fund	(996)	0	180	(817)
Schools Block De-delegated	(267)	148	(57)	(176)
Schools Block - other	(92)	0	(5)	(97)
Early Years Block	1,052	0	210	1,261
Central School Services Block	39	0	(38)	1
High Needs Block	5,070	0	4,265	9,336
Grant changes	(45)	0	(13)	(58)
<b>Total Deficit Balance</b>	<b>4,761</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>4,541</b>	<b>9,450</b>

9.2 The chart below shows the cumulative expected deficit at month 10 compared to the actual deficit over the last five years.



9.3 The main reason for the change between month 10 and outturn in 23/24 is explained in 8.3 above.

## 10. Conclusion

10.1 The cumulative deficit on the DSG blocks now totals £9.5m. Over spends in the High Needs Block are the most significant with a total deficit against this block of £9.3m and this will remain the area of focus going in 2024/25, in conjunction with the Department for Education's Delivering Better Value in SEND programme.

## 11. Appendices

Appendix A – DSG 2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report: Outturn

### Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) 2023/2024 Budget Monitoring Outturn

Cost Centre	Description	Original Budget 2023/24	Net Virements in year	Amended Budget 2023/24	Outturn	Variance	Comments
90020	Primary Schools (excluding nursery funding)	55,688,850		55,688,850	55,688,850	0	
DSG top slice	Academy Schools Primary	0		0	0	0	
90025	Secondary Schools (excluding 6th form funding)	20,405,140		20,405,140	20,405,160	20	
DSG top slice	Academy Schools Secondary	0		0	0	0	
90230	DD - Schools in Financial Difficulty (primary schools)	0		0	0	0	
90113	DD - Trade Union Costs	57,830		57,830	57,832	2	
90255	DD - Support to Ethnic minority & bilingual Learners	186,100	-22,910	163,190	163,190	-1	
90349	DD - Behaviour Support Services	234,910	-10,690	224,220	224,220	0	
90424	DD - CLEAPSS	3,210		3,210	2,812	-398	
90470	DD - School Improvement	308,160	-23,250	284,910	284,906	-4	
90423	DD - Statutory & Regulatory Duties	124,230	-5,010	119,220	119,216	-4	
90235	School Contingency - Growth Fund/Falling Rolls Fund	0	179,520	179,520	179,519	-1	Spend funded by reserves
90054	De-delegated funding from reserves	-147,692		-147,692	-147,692	0	
	SSR	91,756		91,756	91,756	0	
	<b>Schools Block Total</b>	<b>76,952,494</b>	<b>117,660</b>	<b>77,070,154</b>	<b>77,069,770</b>	<b>-384</b>	
90583	National Copyright Licences	168,090		168,090	168,092	2	
90019	Servicing of Schools Forum	45,030		45,030	42,283	-2,747	
90743	School Admissions	189,150		189,150	189,253	103	
90354	ESG - Education Welfare	177,480		177,480	140,901	-36,579	one-off saving on staffing costs plus FPN income considerably higher than budget
90460	ESG - Statutory & Regulatory Duties	294,530		294,530	296,625	2,095	
90054	Efficiency Target	997		997	0	-997	unallocated 23/24 grant to be used to off-set reserve deficit
	SSR	98,039		98,039	98,039	0	
	<b>Central School Services Block DSG</b>	<b>973,316</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>973,316</b>	<b>935,192</b>	<b>-38,124</b>	
90010	Early Years Funding - Nursery Schools	931,080	67,170	998,250	1,028,904	30,654	
90037	Early Years Funding - Maintained Schools	2,016,590	139,620	2,156,210	2,164,143	7,933	
90036	Early Years Funding - PVI Sector	6,202,250	435,963	6,638,213	6,688,336	50,123	Adjustment still required for 2YO funding
90052	Early Years PPG & Deprivation Funding	218,930	14,110	233,040	220,711	-12,329	
90053	Disability Access Fund	43,060		43,060	25,414	-17,646	
90018	2 year old funding	724,260	53,840	778,100	832,499	54,399	
90017	Central Expenditure on Children under 5	339,480		339,480	342,091	2,611	Pay award higher than budgeted
90287	Pre School Teacher Counselling	64,040		64,040	64,650.91	611	Teacher payrise element that was more than the budgeted value
90238	Early Years Inclusion Fund	108,000		108,000	81,491	-26,509	Plans to spend were rejected
90054	Early Years adjustment re grant funding	122,681		122,681	-200,800	-323,481	
	SSR	77,731		77,731	77,731	0	
	<b>Early Years Block Total</b>	<b>10,848,102</b>	<b>710,703</b>	<b>11,558,805</b>	<b>11,325,171</b>	<b>-233,634</b>	



### Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) 2023/2024 Budget Monitoring Outturn

Cost Centre	Description	Original Budget 2023/24	Net Virements in year	Amended Budget 2023/24	Outturn	Variance	Comments
90026	Academy Schools RU Top Ups	985,450		985,450	1,378,364	392,914	
90539	Special Schools - Top Up Funding	5,950,060		5,950,060	5,676,186	-273,874	
90548	Non WBC Special Schools - Top Up Funding	430,660		430,660	445,499	14,839	
90554	Non WBC free schools	536,480		536,480	660,692	124,212	
90556	SEMH provision at Theale	919,000		919,000	986,986	67,986	
90575	Non LEA Special School (OofA)	1,177,630		1,177,630	1,092,852	-84,778	
90579	Independent Special School Place & Top Up	5,566,450		5,566,450	4,965,814	-600,636	
90580	Further Education Colleges Top Up	1,212,000		1,212,000	1,628,914	416,914	
90617	Resourced Units top up Funding maintained	320,630		320,630	655,772	335,142	
90618	Non WBC Resourced Units - Top Up Funding	119,850		119,850	95,738	-24,112	
90621	Mainstream - Top Up Funding maintained	1,142,580		1,142,580	1,687,494	544,914	
90622	Mainstream - Top Up Funding Academies	548,920		548,920	928,159	379,239	
90624	Non WBC Mainstream - Top Up Funding	180,000		180,000	152,115	-27,885	
90625	Pupil Referral Units - Top Up Funding	999,700	90,000	1,089,700	959,950	-129,750	
90627	Disproportionate No: of HN Pupils NEW	65,000		65,000	194,565	129,565	
90628	EHCP PRU Placement	920,420		920,420	1,084,765	164,345	
	<b>High Needs Block: Top Up Funding Total</b>	<b>21,074,830</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>21,164,830</b>	<b>22,593,864</b>	<b>1,429,034</b>	
90320	Pupil Referral Units	660,000		660,000	660,000	0	
90540	Special Schools	2,860,000		2,860,000	2,860,000	0	
90546	Special Schools - Place Funding Post 16	790,000		790,000	790,000	0	
90551	Mainstream Maintained - post 16 SEN places	36,000		36,000	36,000	0	
90552	Special Schools and PRU Teachers Pay and Pension	312,050		312,050	324,864	12,814	
90584	Resourced Units - Place Funding	242,000		242,000	238,000	-4,000	
	<b>High Needs Block: Place Funding Total</b>	<b>4,900,050</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,900,050</b>	<b>4,908,864</b>	<b>8,814</b>	
90240	Applied Behaviour Analysis	226,660		226,660	335,102	108,442	
90280	Special Needs Support Team	346,350		346,350	345,230	-1,120	
90281	SEND Strategy (DSG)	64,940		64,940	66,653	1,713	
90282	Medical Home Tuition	388,730		388,730	208,124	-180,606	huge reduction in use of casual workers going forward, with emphasis on using permanent staff - plans have been further delayed re way forward so a current year saving plus removal of EOTAS post until next financial year
90237	High Needs Contingency	200,960	-90,000	110,960	111,199	239	
90286	Early Years Speech & Language	0	23,665	23,665	12,290	-11,375	
90287	Pre School Teacher Counselling	90,430		90,430	91,293.91	864	
90288	Elective Home Education Monitoring	34,320		34,320	33,084	-1,236	

### Dedicated School's Grant (DSG) 2023/2024 Budget Monitoring Outturn

Cost Centre	Description	Original Budget 2023/24	Net Virements in year	Amended Budget 2023/24	Outturn	Variance	Comments
90290	Sensory Impairment	282,340		282,340	264,955	-17,385	
90295	Therapy Services	469,700		469,700	490,251	20,551	
90372	Therapeutic Thinking	58,590		58,590	30,986	-27,604	
90373	Emotional Based School Avoiders (EBSA)	134,840		134,840	105,075	-29,765	
90374	SEMH Practitioner	41,490		41,490	25,482	-16,008	
90555	LAL funding	161,690		161,690	161,690	0	
90557	Kennet Valley Resource Unit	0		0	1,319	1,319	
90565	Equipment For SEN Pupils	15,000		15,000	-872	-15,872	
90577	SEN Commissioned Provision	636,220		636,220	654,469	18,249	
90582	PRU Outreach	61,200		61,200	61,200	0	
90585	HN Outreach Special Schools	50,000		50,000	50,000	0	
90610	Hospital Tuition	36,180		36,180	5,055	-31,125	
90830	ASD Teachers	285,880		285,880	282,703	-3,177	
90961	Vulnerable Children	179,400		179,400	112,558	-66,842	
90581	Dingleys Promise	30,000		30,000	30,000	0	
	<b>High Needs Block: Non Top Up or Place Funding</b>	<b>3,794,920</b>	<b>-66,335</b>	<b>3,728,585</b>	<b>3,477,847</b>	<b>-250,738</b>	
90054	Efficiency Target	-3,064,547	-23,665	-3,088,212	0	3,088,212	
	SSR	176,475		176,475	176,474	-1	
	<b>High Needs Block Total</b>	<b>26,881,728</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26,881,728</b>	<b>31,157,050</b>	<b>4,275,322</b>	
	<b>TOTAL DSG EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>115,655,640</b>	<b>828,363</b>	<b>116,484,003</b>	<b>120,487,183</b>	<b>4,003,180</b>	
90030	DSG Grant Account	-115,655,640		-115,655,640	-115,274,493	381,147	
	Early Years Supplementary Funding	0.00	-710,703	-710,703	-710,703	0	
	Pupil Premium adjustment from prior year				39,445	39,445	
	<b>Net In-year Deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>117,660</b>	<b>117,660</b>	<b>4,541,432</b>	<b>4,423,772</b>	
	<b>Deficit Balance brought forward</b>	<b>4,761,000</b>		<b>4,761,000</b>	<b>4,760,995</b>	<b>-5</b>	
	<b>In year reserve movement</b>		<b>-117,660</b>	<b>-117,660</b>	<b>147,692</b>	<b>265,352</b>	Funding from reserves for de-delegations
	<b>Cumulative Deficit</b>	<b>4,761,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,761,000</b>	<b>9,450,118</b>	<b>4,689,118</b>	

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## Education Unions: Facility Time Report

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**Report being considered by:** Schools Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Report Author:** Richard Hand

**Item for:** Information **By:** All Forum Members

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### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To inform members about the activities of the teaching trade unions

### 2. Recommendation

2.1 That Schools' Forum note the report

### 3. Introduction/Background

3.1 The industrial dispute was resolved with the acceptance of a 6.5% pay rise from September 2023. Whilst this is welcome and is now above inflation, it is lower than the average pay rise in the private sector and is still historically, for experienced teachers, 13% lower pay in real terms than in 2010. In the private sector, average wages in real terms are approximately 2% higher than in 2010. So there is a general picture of stagnation of wages, but it is deeper and longer in the public sector and for education staff.

The STPRB reports its findings and recommendations to the DfE in May. The DfE have not made a submission with guidance about the amount of a percentage pay rise, but Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary has said that the '*impact of pay rises on school budgets should be considered*<sup>1</sup>. This implies that there will be a below inflation pay rise – again – exacerbating all of the problems outlined below and increasing the likelihood of more industrial action. The NEU electronic ballot did reach the 50% threshold, but any move to a formal ballot will not take place until the Autumn term.

The March 24 report by the NFER paints a pretty grim picture: '*This sixth annual report shows that teacher supply is in a critical state, representing a substantial risk to the quality of education*<sup>2</sup>. **The recruitment crisis is obviously adding to the workload of all in education and it is driving virtually every aspect of casework which we undertake.**

We are now in a situation where we have amongst the largest class sizes<sup>3</sup> in the OECD with the smallest classrooms. This is creating unsustainable pressure on staff and can often be the trigger for ill health and prolonged absence, disciplinary issues and stress related illness and capability. All of this is surfacing in the casework that union officials are dealing with. Research by the TUC backs up the findings of the NFER. Their analysis found the following on teacher vacancies which are particularly acute in the South East: '*data shows the total has risen nearly six-fold, with 2,100 teacher vacancies in November 2023 — compared with just 355 in November 2010.*<sup>4</sup> The inability of schools to be able to recruit new staff and retain experienced staff is clearly having a significant knock on effect. Whilst it is correct that there are more teachers than ever before, this needs to be understood within the context of teacher-pupil ratios and the demographic of the

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<sup>1</sup> [Teacher pay: Consider 'impact' on budgets, Keegan tells STRB \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/teacher-pay-consider-impact-on-budgets-keegan-tells-strb/)

<sup>2</sup> [Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2024 - NFER](https://www.nfer.org.uk/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2024-nfer/)

<sup>3</sup> [Student-teacher ratio and average class size \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/student-teacher-ratio-and-average-class-size/)

<sup>4</sup> [Six-fold rise in teacher vacancies under Tories, TUC analysis shows | Morning Star \(morningstaronline.co.uk\)](https://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/six-fold-rise-in-teacher-vacancies-under-tories-tuc-analysis-shows/)

workforce. In England, teachers are amongst the youngest in the OECD: *'In England (UK), teachers are, on average, 39 years old, which is lower than the average age of teachers across OECD countries and economies participating in TALIS (44 years old). Furthermore, 18% of teachers in England (UK) are aged 50 and above (OECD average 34%)'*<sup>5</sup> This is, of course, historic data being 6 years old now so it is bound to be even worse given the passing of time. It represents the loss of a wealth of experience and is driven by older teachers leaving early or retiring early. They are often over 50 and therefore more expensive and tend to be disproportionately female. Several casework issues have emerged where older teachers are in effect 'managed out'. A younger workforce injects energy without doubt (and they are cheaper) but there are issues with lack of experience which can generate its own issues.

West Berkshire, at least, does not have some of the issues which big MATs are experiencing given most of the schools in the county remain within the LA. Teacher turnover in MATs is very high and perhaps a cautionary tale for any school considering joining one. The EPI's report outlined in Schools Week makes interesting reading: *'Big MATs have highest teacher turnover, EPI finds'*<sup>6</sup>

This, of course, takes place against a backdrop of real term funding cuts. Schoolcuts.org allows average cuts to be tracked via its site which is robustly calculated and peer reviewed.<sup>7</sup> The IFS Annual Report on Education spending states: *'In 2022–23, total public spending on education in the UK stood at £116 billion (including the cost of issuing student loans and in 2023–24 prices). In real terms, this represents an 8% or £10 billion fall since 2010–11.'*<sup>8</sup> Essentially, schools are being asked to do more, for less and the consequences are clear.

### 3.2 III Health and Absence Management

All of the issues above have led to an increase in ill health management and referrals to OH. A good deal of this is stress related which leads to mental health issues. The Fifth Annual Workforce Attitudes to Mental Health states: *'this new survey has revealed that education is actually the most stressful career path with a staggering 93% of those in the profession feeling stressed at least once a week'*<sup>9</sup> Schools for the most part are very good at trying to support their staff, with the help of the LA and union involvement, but the root causes of the issue is often beyond the control of those involved and members often have an unrealistic expectation of what can be done.

School leaders bear the brunt of things and this is clearly impacting them too. The government's own workload report<sup>10</sup> outlines the issue and its findings were published in Schoolsweek: *'While teachers reported working fewer hours on average than leaders, there was an increase since 2022 (from 48.7 to 49.4). Average hours worked per week increased for full-time teachers (from 51.9 to 52.4'*<sup>11</sup> This means that it is often impossible to get a work life balance and it is taking its toll on our educators and particularly our school leaders.

Ofsted is, we are told, undergoing change in light of the dreadful impact it has on the working lives of educational staff. However, single word judgements are being retained in

<sup>5</sup> [\[Title\] \(oecd.org\)](#) Talis report for OECD 2018

<sup>6</sup> [Big MATs have highest teacher turnover, EPI finds \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [School Cuts](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Annual report on education spending in England: 2023 | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [On its way: Fifth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health \(headspace.com\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Working lives of teachers and leaders – wave 2 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Leaders and teachers work longer hours despite workload push \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](#)

defiance of the advice of the Education Select Committee. The Education Support organisation reports the following: *'The overall picture of wellbeing is poor in the sector, with senior leaders remaining at risk, and classroom teachers seeing a significant decline in overall wellbeing'*<sup>12</sup>. It is to be hoped that campaigners like Professor Julia Waters, sister of Headteacher Ruth Perry, will eventually be listened to. *'Perry's sister, Prof Julia Waters, reacted with fury to the government's statement, published on Thursday in response to an inquiry into Ofsted by MPs on the Commons education committee, describing it as "woefully inadequate"'*<sup>13</sup>.

A development worthy of note in relation to reducing sickness absence emerges from research into the use of HEPA filters which many schools used during the COVID crisis. Whilst the government is yet to act on this data, reported by Professor Cath Noakes, it states that findings indicates *"illness rates over 20% lower than those in the non-HEPA arm" according to Professor Cath Noakes, the study's lead investigator who disclosed this figure at the WHO/ Europe conference on indoor air'*<sup>14</sup>. These units are cheap to make<sup>15</sup> and it is certainly worth schools considering installation in the most poorly ventilated areas.

### 3.3 **Malicious and Vexatious complaints (and social media)**

We have seen an increase in the number of these referrals. They are often made by parents. Whilst they do have to be investigated, it is often a time-consuming process which has a detrimental effect on staff and investigating officers. A report in March 24 by Leora Crudas stated that *'the volume of complaints that its members are seeing is "not sustainable" and "will have an impact on our ability to retain our leaders"'*<sup>16</sup>. The unions are aware of at least one senior leader at a primary who has resigned as a result of vexatious complaints. With staff, especially younger staff (as alluded to above), there is often a naivete around the use of social media which can lead to difficult situations. The unions would urge all schools and the LA to make sure that they have robust policies and guidance on social media usage which protects staff and leaders. There is a duty of care here which often gets neglected in the context of KCSIE.

#### 3.2.1 **Capability and Appraisal**

As part of the negotiations with the DfE workload group, it has been recommended that performance related pay/appraisal is reformed in order to reduce workload. The unions support this. Often, case work emerges when members are not given pay increases on spurious grounds and appeals are made. Capability is a sufficient mechanism to deal with underperformance and is intended to be a supportive process so that staff can improve. This is an imperative given the shortage of staff.

#### 3.2.2 **Disciplinary**

Disciplinaries have not increased significantly, but there have been more referrals. Often they emerge as a result of stress as outlined above. We are seeing suspensions being made at an early stage when it might not necessarily be needed. The LADO gives crucial advice in relation to safeguarding, but schools often have the bigger picture and what they are told is advisory.

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<sup>12</sup> [Inspections deemed 'not fit for purpose' by teachers and education staff as they battle loneliness, stress and burnout \(educationsupport.org.uk\)](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> [Ruth Perry family furious as Ofsted single-word ratings are retained | Education policy | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/feb/25/ruth-perry-family-furious-as-ofsted-single-word-ratings-are-retained)

<sup>14</sup> [Class-ACT study shows Air Cleaning reduced illness rates in UK schools during major COVID-19 epidemic - Corsi-Rosenthal Foundation \(corsirosenthalfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.corsi-rosenthal.org.uk)

<sup>15</sup> [UK Version - How to make a Corsi-Rosenthal Box \(squarespace.com\)](https://www.squarespace.com)

<sup>16</sup> [Parental complaints: CST calls for policy change for schools | Tes](https://www.tes.com/news/parental-complaints-cst-calls-for-policy-change-for-schools)

### **3.2.3 Contracts, Pay and Conditions**

Given the dispute and the near uniform application of the pay uplift, there have not been many issues here of late. However, we are hearing that at least one school did not apply the 6.5% to TLRs. This is incorrect and will be challenged. Given teacher pay and any pay rise this year will probably not be met with commensurate increases in funding, it is anticipated that issues will emerge next year around pressure to save money.

### **3.2.4 Grievance**

Grievances are still being lodged. Advising members to try and resolve issues via informal routes has can lead to a decline in requests to move to formal grievance. However, it is worth noting that where grievances are lodged, they are again often related to work load, accountability and demands that are perceived to have contravened policies or directed time guidance.

### **3.2.5 Settlements**

There have been a few settlement agreements this year. They are often time consuming and expensive but occur when relations between employer and employee break down beyond repair and often offer the best solution for all parties to move on.

### **3.3.6 Governance**

Having good governors in place is vital and the union enthusiastically recommends that as much training as possible is offered. Conversely, poor governance can create more problems than it solves and can make processes protracted, especially in relation to breaches of policy and employment law if governors do not know the details, or indeed, understand them.

### **3.3.7 Collective issues**

The amount of cover that staff are requested to do continues to be a growing concern. Schools should have 'rarely cover' policies which means that any absences known in advance do not call on staff to cover the lessons. There is always confusion over loading and protected time if staff have a TLR. Schools are in the invidious position, however, of not having enough cover supervisors in an environment where sickness absence, often related to workload, is increasing. This can lead to a spiral of decline where staff are put upon more to cover and then they themselves end up not being able to cope.

## **3.4 LA Policies and guidance**

Rationalising the approach to dealing with policies that need reviewing is always discussed at ECM. It has been agreed that key policy documents are prioritised and that unions meet separately in order to give them proper scrutiny

#### 4 Funding 2024-2025

Union	Total amount	Approx equivalent number of days of supply
NEU	<b>£45,879.96</b>	164.60
NAHT	<b>£4,735.32</b>	12.50
ASCL	<b>£3,963.17</b>	9.65

Please note that the above figures are for 23/24. Figures for financial year 24/25 have not yet been received but should be available from WB HR.

#### 5 Consultation and Engagement

Secretaries of the recognised teacher trade unions (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, Association of School and College Leaders, National Association of Headteachers, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, National Union of Teachers – position currently vacant)

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## Vulnerable Children's Grant 2023-2024

**Report being considered by:** Schools' Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Report Author:** Beth Cartwright & Nicola Ponton

**Item for:** Information **By:** All Forum Members

### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 Review of Vulnerable Children's Fund 2023/2024

### 2. Recommendation

1.1 That Forum Members note the report.

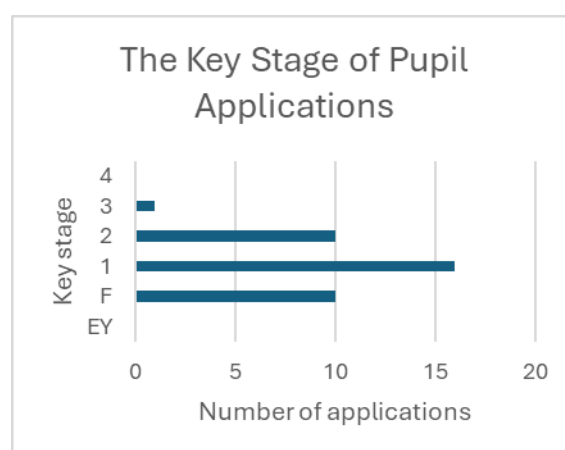
### 3. Introduction/Background

3.1 The Vulnerable Children's Grant (VCG) is a relatively small fund for schools who have unexpected additional financial pressures due to in-year admissions of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or for children whose needs suddenly change. It is specifically devised to promote social inclusion, reduce exclusions and reduce the pressure on SEN budgets by providing temporary funding.

### 4. Supporting Information

4.1 The VCG budget for 2023-2024 was £67,000

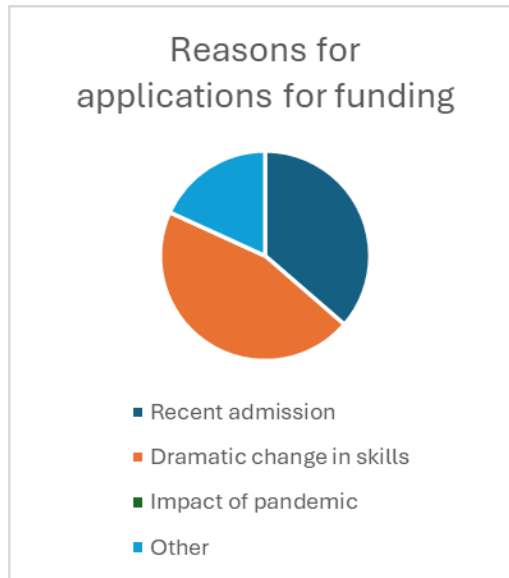
4.2 27 settings successfully applied for VCG funding for 54 pupils. The vast majority of applications were received from primary schools, with most supported requested for pupils in key stage 1.



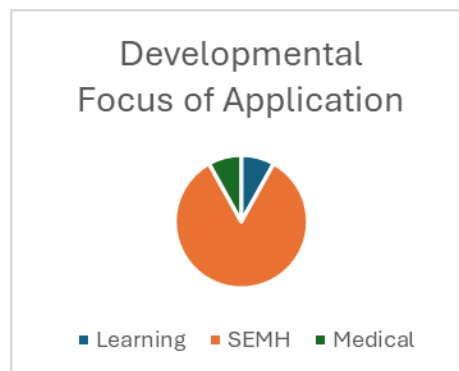
Most of the applications received were either for support for:

- Pupils who had arrived as an in-year admission
- A dramatic change in pupil need

- An ‘other’ reason, e.g. children having been made homeless, parental difficulties meaning that getting to school was complicated.



Most applications were to support a pupil’s Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, with the remaining 16% requiring learning or support related to their medical needs.

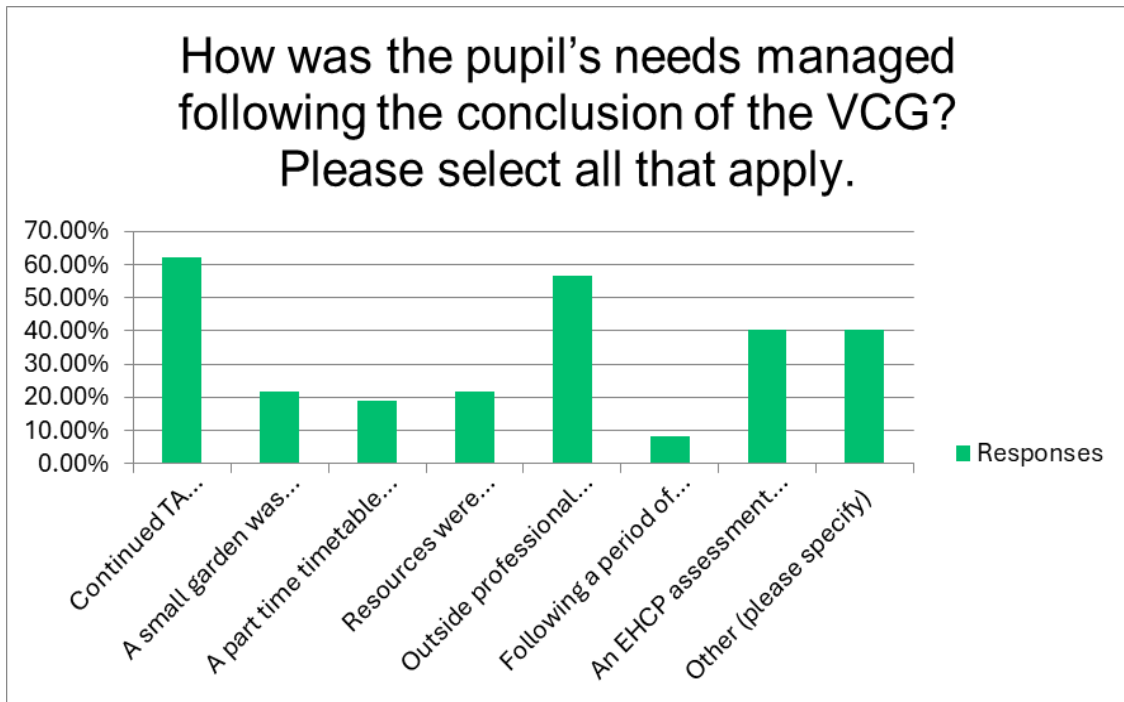


The vast majority of applications (95%) requested money for TA support. When schools were surveyed in May 2024, responses indicated that the TA support was predominantly used to support a pupil’s SEMH needs and inclusion in school by providing additional support in class, or in a differentiated learning provision (a ‘small garden’). As a result of this creative package, positives included; increased attendance, reduced suspensions, and children becoming more settled with staff learning to identify children’s triggers/ emotional needs.

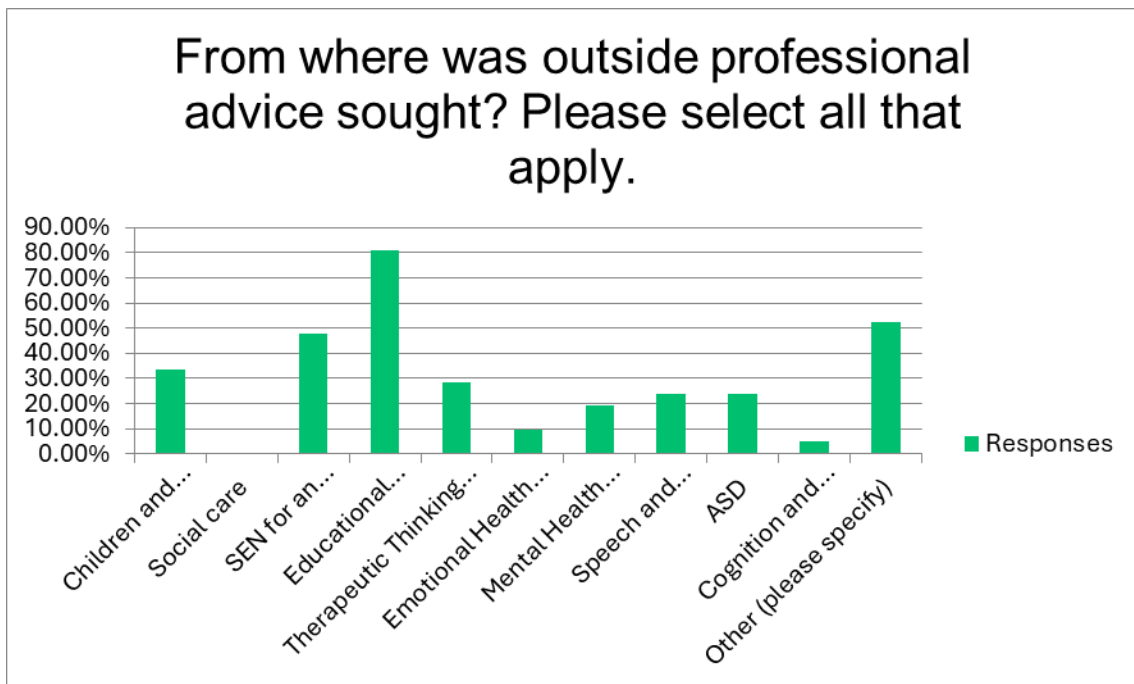
*‘It has been possible to set up routines for the child and to implement advice received from the Autism Team. It gave us the opportunity to be flexible in the way that we supported X and to allow him time to adjust to school. We were able to implement an individual timetable with personalised learning.’*

*‘We have been able to offer a wider range of activities as part of his small garden approach. We have also been able to introduce sensory circuits as part of his day. We are beginning to see some positive developments in his behaviour as a result.’*

Although 8% of pupils didn’t require additional support after the conclusion of the VCG, the vast majority did. Schools often used their own budgets to continue to provide TA support, as well as supporting in other ways, e.g. purchasing resources. The VCG often helped schools gain evidence for an EHCP assessment and the subsequent EHCP meant they had the funding to continue the support.



The survey suggests that pupils in receipt of VCG had significant needs as Educational Psychology involvement was sought for 81% of pupils, 33% were referred to CAMHS and an EHCP assessment was requested for 48% of pupils. College was also requested for several children.



Schools were clear that the VCG is an effective use of funds. 91% of pupils were said to have made 'a lot' or 'some' progress since receiving funding:

*'Incidences of physical and emotional outbursts have reduced.'*

*'The child is more settled in the Reception unit and there have been less incidents of them running around school disrupting learning.'*

*'Without this support, I would think that attendance and attainment would be much lower.'*

*'Relative to the pupil's needs where we were when we applied for the grant, there has been ENORMOUS progress.'*

*'Girls are both now in school every day and enjoying school life. They are participating in all lessons and have made friends.'*

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The VCG aims to be fair, equitable and simple to request. Feedback from schools indicates that it is valued and has significant impact. If schools, particularly smaller primary schools, cannot access this support in the future it could lead to increased movement between schools, higher exclusion figures and increased pressure on the capacity of specialist support services.

# Agenda Item 15

## Schools Forum Work Programme 2024/25

	Item	HFG Deadline	Heads Funding Group	SF Deadline	Schools Forum	Action required	Author
Term 6	Schools' Forum Membership and Constitution from September 2024			09/07/2024	15/07/2024	Decision	Jessica Bailiss
	Scheme for Financing Schools 2024/25	25/06/2024	02/07/2024	09/07/2024	15/07/2024	Decision	Melanie Ellis
	Surplus Balances 2023/24	25/06/2024	02/07/2024	09/07/2024	15/07/2024	Discussion	Melanie Ellis
	Update on the the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme ( <i>standing item</i> )	25/06/2024	02/07/2024	09/07/2024	15/07/2024	Discussion / Decision	Hester Collicut / Susan Tanner
	Deficit Schools ( <i>standing item</i> )	25/06/2024	02/07/2024	09/07/2024	15/07/2024	Information	Melanie Ellis
	DSG Monitoring 2024/25 Month 3			09/07/2024	15/07/2024	Information	Lisa Potts/Neil Goddard
Term 1	Schools Funding Formula Consultation 2025/26	25/09/2024	02/10/2024	08/10/2024	14/10/2024	Decision	Melanie Ellis
	Draft De-delegations 2024/25	25/09/2024	02/10/2024	08/10/2024	14/10/2024	Decision	Lisa Potts
	Update on the the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme	25/09/2024	02/10/2024	08/10/2024	14/10/2024	information	Hester Collicut / Susan Tanner
	DSG Monitoring 2024/25 Month 6			08/10/2024	14/10/2024	Information	Lisa Potts/Neil Goddard
	Update on the the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme ( <i>standing item</i> )	25/09/2024	02/10/2024	08/10/2024	14/10/2024	Discussion / Decision	Hester Collicut / Susan Tanner
	Deficit Schools ( <i>standing item</i> )	25/09/2024	02/10/2024	08/10/2024	14/10/2024	Decision	Melanie Ellis
Term 2	Provisional DSG Funding Settlement Overview 2024/25	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Discussion	Melanie Ellis
	Final De-delegations 2025/26	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Decision	Lisa Potts
	Update on HNB Invest to Save Projects	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Discussion	Jane Seymour/Nicola Ponton
	School Funding Formula 2025/26	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Decision	Melanie Ellis
	Budgets for Additional Funds 2025/26	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Decision	Melanie Ellis
	Draft Central Schools Block Budget 2025/26	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Discussion	Melanie Ellis
	Draft High Needs Budget Proposals 2025/26	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Discussion	Jane Seymour
	Update on the the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme ( <i>standing item</i> )	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Discussion / Decision	Hester Collicut / Susan Tanner
	Deficit Schools ( <i>standing item</i> )	12/11/2024	19/11/2024	26/11/2024	02/12/2024	Information	Melanie Ellis
Term 3	Final DSG Funding Settlement Overview 2025/26	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Discussion	Melanie Ellis
	Final School Funding 2025/26	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Decision	Melanie Ellis
	High Needs Block Budget Proposals 2025/26	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Decision	Jane Seymour
	Final Central School Block Budget Proposals 2025/26	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Decision	Lisa Potts
	Growth Fund 2023/24	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Information	Melanie Ellis
	DSG Monitoring 2024/25 Month 9			14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Information	Lisa Potts/Neil Goddard
	Update on the the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme ( <i>standing item</i> )	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Discussion / Decision	Hester Collicut / Susan Tanner
Term 4	Deficit Schools ( <i>standing item</i> )	19/12/2024	08/01/2025	14/01/2025	20/01/2025	Information	Melanie Ellis
	Work Programme 2025/26			04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Decision	Jessica Bailiss
	Delivering Better Value Programme Update	18/02/2025	25/02/2025	04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Discussion	Jane Seymour
	Final High Needs Block Budget 2025/26	18/02/2025	25/02/2025	04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Decision	Jane Seymour
	Final Early Years Block Budget 2025/26	18/02/2025	25/02/2025	04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Decision	Lisa Potts
	DSG Monitoring 2024/25 Month 10			04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Information	Lisa Potts/Neil Goddard
	Update on the the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme ( <i>standing item</i> )	18/02/2025	25/02/2025	04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Discussion / Decision	Hester Collicut / Susan Tanner
Deficit Schools ( <i>standing item</i> )	18/02/2025	25/02/2025	04/03/2025	10/03/2025	Information	Melanie Ellis	

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## Schools' Forum - Contracts - Forward Plan

*The Schools' Forum must be consulted when the local authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the Schools Budget (Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)) and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds (£170,781.60).*

Contract Title	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date (initial term)	Contract End Date (Including any Extension)	Contract Term in years (in brackets maximum possible extension)	Contract Total Value (£) based on Initial Term	Contract Amount (Total Value inclusive of Contract Extension Agreed)	Supplier name	WBC Responsible Officer	Notes
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)	01/08/2021	31/07/2024	31/07/2025	3 (4)	£164,850	£239,500	Rose Road Association	Thomas Ng / Kiki Hurford (supports procurement process only)	This contract is not funded from the DSG and is an Information item only. One year extension was negotiated between council and provider and approved at Procurement Board
West Berkshire Schools Meals Service	24/07/2020	23/07/2023	23/07/2025	3 (2)	£600000approx	£1,000,000	Caterlink	Kiki Hurford (supports procurement process only)	Invoices are paid directly from schools that opted to be in the contract. The contract has been extended by two years to 2025 in consultation with the relevant WBC officers and the schools that are part of the contract. The contract is reviewed on an annual basis by the head teachers (in July). The procurement process is supported by a WBC Officer.
Education Packages for Young People with Severe Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties	01/09/2020	31/08/2023	31/08/2025	3 (2)	£1,674,000	£2,790,000	Engaging Potential LTD	Jane Seymour / Kiki Hurford (supports procurement process only)	Information on this contract was included within the High Needs Block Report brought to the Forum in March 2023.
Energy Framework - CCS framework RM6011 - Electricity	01/04/2017 (rolling contract since 2008)	01/10/2023	31/03/2025		£5,421,522		EDF (HH)	Adrian Slaughter/Sarah Wood	The central energy contract is a non-mandated contract that maintained schools can access for provision of their gas and electricity. Any schools interested in joining the contract should email <a href="mailto:energymangement@westberks.gov.uk">energymangement@westberks.gov.uk</a> for more information.
Energy Framework – CCS Framework RM6011 - Gas	01/04/2017 (rolling contract since 2008))	01/10/2023	31/03/2025		£1,325,589		Total	Adrian Slaughter/Sarah Wood	
Children and Young People's Integrated Therapies (CYPIT)	01/04/2023	31/08/2028	31/03/3031	5 (3)	£2,348,480	£3,757,568	Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Kiki Hurford / Thomas Bailey	A report was brought to the Schools' Forum meeting in October 2022 and the new therapy contract was agreed.

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