

Central Schools' Services Block Budget 2026/27

Report being considered by: Schools' Forum
Date of Meeting: 19th January 2026
Report Author:
Item for: Decision **By:** All Forum Members

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To set out the budget proposal for services funded from the Central Schools' Services (CSSB) block of the DSG.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Central Schools Services Block is set with a deficit budget

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
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		

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B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Data Impact:		X		

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The CSSB covers funding allocated to Local Authorities (LAs) to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in state-funded maintained schools and academies in England. All the services funded by this block are statutory and have to be carried out.
- 4.2 The final allocation of funding for the Central Schools Services Block for 2026/27 is £1,109,940, which is a £42k or 3.9% increase on the previous year. Total costs are £1,175,587 which leaves a shortfall of £65,647.
- 4.3 The Central Schools Services Block grant is based on the number of pupils on the census multiplied by a rate set by the Department for Education (DFE). As the birth rate has been dropping, the level of grant has not increased in line with the staff costs, leaving a gap in the budget.
- 4.4 The following table shows the budget requirement for the services that fall within the Central Schools Services Block for 2026/27 compared to 2025/26.

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	2025/26 Budget	2026/27 Budget Requirement	Increase/Decrease	Change
	£	£	£	%
Budget Requirement:				
School Admissions	239,336	241,694	2,358	1%
National Copyright Licences	184,097	203,756	19,659	11%
Servicing of Schools Forum	55,158	55,874	716	1%
Education Welfare	246,411	248,350	1,939	1%
Support for Inclusion	-	64,670	64,670	
Statutory & Regulatory Duties:				
Provision of Education Data	187,008	197,578	10,570	6%
Finance Support for the Education Service	88,005	92,385	4,380	5%
Strategic Planning of the Education Service	67,450	71,280	3,830	6%
Total Budget Requirement	1,067,465	1,175,587	108,122	10.1%

Issue Identification

- 4.5 Whilst the rate set by the DFE has increased, the number of pupils on the census has been decreasing. The majority of the costs in the block are staff and systems costs, which increase year on year.

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	census (pupils)	DFE rate	£	
22/23	23139	42.87	991,947	
23/24	23285	41.80	973,313	
24/25	23053	42.14	971,453	
25/26	22800	46.84	1,067,952	Includes element for TPAG grant
26/27	22419	49.51	1,109,940	

4.6 The 2025/26 grant includes elements of a grant previously received separately.

4.7 The overall grant level has been decreasing for a number of years, making it difficult to balance the block.

Consultation and Engagement

4.8 Consultation with the Service Managers who run the services funded by the Central School Services Block.

Monitoring and Evaluation

4.9 These budgets will be monitored as part of the quarterly budget monitoring cycle through the Heads Funding Group and Schools Forum meeting

5. Introduction and background

5.1 The CSSB covers funding allocated to Local Authorities (LAs) to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in state-funded maintained schools and academies in England. All the services funded by this block are statutory and have to be carried out.

5.2 The final allocation of funding for the Central Schools Services Block for 2026/27 is £1,109,940, which is a £42k or 3.9% increase on the previous year. Total costs are £1,175,587 which leaves a shortfall of £65,647.

5.3 The following table shows the budget requirement for the services that fall within the Central Schools Services Block for 2026/27 compared to 2025/26.

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Servicing of Schools Forum	55,158	55,874	716	1%
Education Welfare	246,411	248,350	1,939	1%
Support for Inclusion	-	65,470	65,470	
Statutory & Regulatory Duties:				
Provision of Education Data	187,008	197,578	10,570	6%
Finance Support for the Education Service	88,005	92,385	4,380	5%
Strategic Planning of the Education Service	67,450	71,280	3,830	6%
Total Budget Requirement	1,067,465	1,176,387	108,922	10.2%

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- 5.4 For 2026/27, staff on council pay grades have been budgeted at 3.5% pay award, which is where the majority of the increased costs have come from. Other increases relate to the cost of the Capita system and the addition of support for inclusion.
- 5.5 The cost of copyright licence for schools is determined by the relevant national agencies. Details of all the other services included in the Central Schools Services Block (including a breakdown of costs) is given in Appendix A.
- 5.6 The table below shows the 2026/27 budget required, with a funding shortfall of £65,647

Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)	2025/26 Budget	2026/27 Budget Requirement	Increase/ Decrease	Change
	£	£	£	%
Total Budget Requirement	1,067,464	1,175,587	108,122	10.1%
Funding:				
Central Schools Services Block DSG	-1,067,952	-1,109,940	41,988	3.9%
Surplus to fund shortfall on prior year deficit	488			
Deficit on 26/27 funding		-65,647		
Total Funding	-1,067,464	-1,175,587		
Balance	0	-0		

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The expected costs for the Central Schools Services Block for 2026/27 is £1,176,3871, which is a £108,922 increase on 2025/26. We have reviewed all of the current costs needed to support these statutory services, but cannot see any way to reduce the current costs.
- 6.2 There is currently a statutory override in place for the whole of the DSG, with the High Needs Block being the main driver of this overspend. It is not yet known what will happen with the statutory override, but with costs increasing on the CSSB it is necessary to set a deficit on this block.
- 6.3 The deficit budget set out here represents the anticipated expenditure levels based on existing staffing and other commitments. This will be addressed throughout the year through vacancy management and improved commissioning processes. In this way, it is hoped that the deficit can be reduced or offset to deliver a balanced outturn at the financial year end. This will be managed within the broader context of the DSG deficit, and in particular the ongoing pressures on the High Needs block. A national strategy to manage pressures around schools funding and SEND is needed, and is expected in the coming year. It is hoped that this will provide a clear vision and deliver the funding required to support improved outcome for children and young people.

7. View from the Heads' Funding Group

- 7.1 Proposal agreed
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8. Appendices

Appendix A – Details and Costs of Central Schools' Services

Appendix A

	Number of Posts	% Charged to CSSB	2026/27 £
School Admissions			
<u>Description of Statutory Duties covered</u>			
Administration of admissions process for maintained schools and academies			
<u>Staffing Structure</u>			
Admissions and Transport Manager	1.00	80%	
Admissions Officers	2.50	80%	
Admissions and Transport Officer	1.00	40%	
<u>Breakdown of Costs</u>			
Staff salary costs			172,160
Employee Expenses & recharge of appeals costs			18,700
Supplies and Services			1,320
Capita One recharge			24,329
Support Service Recharges			25,185
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR ADMISSIONS			241,694
Servicing the Schools Forum			
<u>Description of Statutory Duties covered</u>			
Setting agendas, minute taking, co-ordination and distribution of papers for Schools Forum and its sub groups			
<u>Staffing Structure</u>			
Service Director Education	1.00	10.00%	
Schools Finance Team	2.00	10.00%	
Schools Forum Clerk			
<u>Breakdown of Costs</u>			
Staff salary costs			49,820
Room hire, consumables and members expenses			1,610
Support Service Recharges			4,444
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR SERVICING THE SCHOOLS FORUM			55,874

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	Number of Posts	% Charged to CSSB	2026/27 £
Education Welfare			
Description of Statutory Duties covered			
Promote regular attendance by registered pupils at schools in West Berkshire and reduce the number and duration of absences			
Develop a strategic approach to improving attendance across the district			
Work with schools to support pupils who are persistently absent			
Progress cases to court where appropriate. Maintain up to date knowledge of legal processes and proceedings so that culpable parents are prosecuted or issued with a fixed penalty notice i.e. Take legal action			
The Education Attendance Team (Education Welfare Service) also have responsibility for Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education and Child Employment which includes:			
*maintaining records and conduct annual reviews of EHE children			
*provide clear written guidance to parents about their responsibilities of EHE children			
*ensure risk assessments carried out for Child Employment, including site visits & issuing child work permits and performance licences			
Staffing Structure			
Principal Education Welfare and Safeguarding Officer	1.00	40%	
Senior Education Welfare Officer	0.80	90%	
Education Welfare Officers	2.36	100%	
Breakdown of Costs			
Staff salary costs			218,119
Employee expenses/car allowances			4,400
Other non staffing costs			11,030
Income from fines			-27,130
Capita One Recharges			10,820
Support Service Recharges			31,111
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR EDUCATION WELFARE			248,350
Support for Inclusion			
Description of Statutory Duties covered			
The local authority must arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin from the sixth school day after the			
Where a pupil has an EHCP, the local authority may need to review the plan or reassess the child's needs, in consultation with the parent			
Maintain a register of pupils who have been excluded			
Organise the IRP within the legal time frame, ensuring the exclusion is lawful, reasonable and fair.			
Staffing Structure			
Staffing	1.00	100%	
Breakdown of Costs			
Staff salary costs			64,670
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR PROVISION OF EDUCATION DATA			64,670

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	Number of Posts	% Charged to CSSB	2026/27 £
Provision of Education Data			
<u>Description of Statutory Duties covered</u>			
Statutory returns to DfE			
Data analysis and reporting e.g. Exam results, performance			
School census administration and reports			
<u>Staffing Structure</u>			
Staffing	2.00	75%	
<u>Breakdown of Costs</u>			
Staff salary costs			98,890
Capita One recharge			85,355
Support Service Recharges			13,333
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR PROVISION OF EDUCATION DATA			197,578
Finance Support for the Education Service			
<u>Description of Statutory Duties covered</u>			
DSG services budget preparation, monitoring, and year end			
Education services budget preparation, monitoring, and year end			
School funding formula and early years funding formula			
Administration of funding allocations to all schools for early years and high needs			
Statutory returns e.g. APT, S251, CFO deployment of DSG			
<u>Staffing Structure</u>			
Service Lead - Financial Management, Revenues & Benefits	1.00	5%	
Education Finance Manager	0.92	15%	
Education Senior Accountant	0.61	50%	
Education Accountant	0.50	65%	
Accountant	1.00	50%	
<u>Breakdown of Costs</u>			
Staff salary costs			77,570
Support Service Recharges			14,815
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR FINANCE SUPPORT			92,385
Strategic Planning of the Education Service			
<u>Description of Statutory Duties covered</u>			
Strategic planning and management of the Education service as a whole			
<u>Staffing Structure</u>			
Service Director Education	1.00	40%	
Other staffing	1.00	27%	
<u>Breakdown of Costs</u>			
Staff salary costs			71,280
TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE FOR PLANNING OF EDUCATION SERVICE			71,280