



West Northants Schools Budget Information and Consultation 2024-25

1. Who is this consultation for?

- 1.1. This consultation is for all maintained and academy schools in West Northamptonshire Council (henceforth 'the council'). There is a specific focus on the local funding formula for mainstream schools, so it will be most relevant for primary and secondary mainstream schools.

2. Overview

- 2.1. This consultation provides an opportunity for the council to engage with all primary and secondary schools, both maintained and academies about the principles of the local school funding formula for 2024-25.
- 2.2. Based on the provisional National Funding Formula (NFF) allocations for the total Dedicated Schools Grant allocation, West Northamptonshire schools, will gain £6.9m (2.0%) overall in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24. This does not include changes in growth funding or the import/export adjustment as the data on those are not yet available. For the indicative 2024-25 budgets we have used the current 2023-24 values as an estimate. We will update this when more information is available.
- 2.3. The Council's schools funding formula will mirror the DfE's national funding formula as closely as possible. There is a further move towards a fully national formula again for 2024-25 with a national split site methodology and rates.
- 2.4. It may not be possible to mirror the NFF completely if the funding formula costs more than the final funding allocation provided in December 2023. Indicative modelling of the 2024-25 schools budgets shows that a cap of 1.48% on per pupil increases will be required in order to bring the schools budgets into balance with the funding available.
- 2.5. Indicative modelling of individual schools budgets, using the NFF rates for 2024-25, indicates that WNC schools could expect to see an increase on the per pupil budget factors between 0.5% and 1.4% and an overall budget changes between -0.3% and 1.8% compared to their 2023-24 budgets when not including new and growing or split site schools who have protected increases under the new formula.

3. 2024-25 Budget Consultation Themes

- 3.1. The council have a number of important themes on which it needs to consult on with schools for setting the 2024-25 budget. Each of these are included as a section within this suggested consultation paper.

4. Responding to the consultation

- 4.1. Please only make one submission per school DfE number. If Academy Trusts which to submit a response, they are very welcome and it will be counted as one response.

- 4.2. To respond to this consultation, please visit:

[To be confirmed]

- 4.3. Appendix 1 to this consultation document provides an indicative financial summary by individual school.

- 4.4. Schools should note that all values are illustrative based on the DfE provisional allocation and values are likely to change when the final allocation is confirmed in December 2023.

- 4.5. In addition, the data used in the financial modelling is based on the same data used to create the 2023-24 schools budgets plus an estimate of growth as the schools census data from October 2023 will not be available until December 2023.

Deadline

- 4.6. The deadline for this consultation is 30 November 2023 at 11:59pm.

Your Responses

- 4.7. The consultation feedback will be shared with Schools Forum at the December 2023 meeting and used to inform the schools funding formula for 2024-25.

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5. Indicative Finance Model based on the Proposed Consultation on the Formula Funding.

- 5.1 The [national funding formula \(NFF\)](#) provides information to schools and LAs on the funding that the Government would provide if there was a single direct national funding formula with no local variation. We are moving closer to a direct national funding formula as per the [2022 consultation](#) and [2023 consultation](#) on

the national split site formula. In 2024-25, as in 2023-24, local authorities will be required to bring their own formulae closer to the schools NFF by 10% for each factor.

- 5.2 WNC aims to follow the NFF as closely as possible. In 2024-25 the NFF minimum funding guarantee (MFG) is 0.5%. This applies to the 'per pupil' parts of the formula funding (the AWPU, deprivation factors, low prior attainment and English as an additional language but not premises related funding) and means that each school's average per pupil value is increased by 0.5% as compared to the prior year 2023-24 funding formula. The range that can be used by LAs in setting the MFG for 2024-25 is 0 to 0.5%.
- 5.3 There is no cap on per pupil increases in the NFF published indicative budgets for 2023-24 but WNC will have to apply a cap. The cap works in a similar way to the MFG in that it is applied to per pupil increases between 2023-24 and 2024-25. This will have to be used for 2024-25 budgets to be able to balance the schools budgets to the schools block funding available.
- 5.4 The financial modelling used to arrive at the indicative budgets is based on the provisional DSG announced within the [NFF on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-funding-formula-2024-25). The NFF does not include the growth fund part of the schools block, so we will use a tool provided by Government to estimate this. Any additional resources available in the final settlement for the schools block DSG will be used to lift the cap as far as possible.
- 5.5 The other protection in the NFF for schools is the minimum per pupil funding level (MppFL). This is an average rate per pupil of all formula funding including the premises factors and for 2023-24 in the NFF these have increased by 4.7%-4.9%:

Table 3: 2024-25 National Funding Formula minimum per pupil funding level

| Year | Primary minimum per pupil funding level | Secondary (KS3 only) minimum per pupil funding level | Secondary (KS4 only) minimum per pupil funding level |
|------------|---|--|--|
| 2023-24 | £4,405 | £5,503 | £6,033 |
| 2024-25 | £4,610 | £5,771 | £6,331 |
| increase £ | £205 | £268 | £298 |
| increase % | 4.7% | 4.9% | 4.9% |

- 5.6 The provisional schools block allocation of DSG plus estimate of growth funding for WNC is £350,385k. WNC propose to transfer 0.5% of the schools block to the high needs block (which was also in place for 2023-24 local funding formula).

- 5.7 We are often asked why some school's budget percentage increases are less than the 0.5% MFG (minimum funding guarantee increase). This is usually because the school has very small number of pupils. The MFG is a protection applied to the per pupil rate, so the lump sum, rates and split sites (if applicable) are not included. The larger the proportion of budget made up of those non-pupil related characteristics, the less impact the MFG increase has on the overall budget for the school. There is also an impact of the increase in the lump sum for 2024-25 as this is removed from the baseline 2023-24 for the MFG calculation.

6 Split Site Funding Policy

Purpose

- 6.1 To update West Northamptonshire Schools of the new national Split Site Policy within the schools national funding formula for 2024-25.

Background

- 6.2 The new split sites factor targets extra funding to schools which operate across more than one site.
- 6.3 The split sites factor is made up of two parts:
- i. Basic eligibility funding: Schools attract a lump sum payment for each of their additional eligible sites – up to a maximum of three additional sites.
 - ii. Distance funding: Additional eligible sites that are separated from the school's main site by more than 100 metres attract distance funding on top of the basic eligibility funding – up to a maximum of three additional sites.
- 6.4 Schools attract basic eligibility funding for each of their additional sites (up to a maximum of 3 per school) which:
- a. Are part of the same school - i.e. have the same unique reference number (URN) as the school's main site.
 - b. Are separated from the school's main site by a public road or a railway.
 - c. Have a building on them which is primarily used for the education of 5 to 16-year old pupils in mainstream education.
- This excludes playing fields, ancillary buildings and buildings leased full time by the school.

Financial Impact

- 6.5 The basic eligibility unit value in the National Funding Formula is £53,700 per additional site, for up to 3 sites. There is a 'tapering' of that rate from the main distance threshold of 500m down to 100m, which means that schools with a distance of less than 500m but more than 100m will receive funding but at a lower rate.
- 6.6 The total funding distributed through the schools funding formula for WNC split sites in 2022-23 was £335k across 5 schools. The new formula has increased this to £1.2m across 7 schools.

The Split site eligibility

- 6.7 Eligible schools have been identified from a data collection exercise in 2022 as part of the budget setting process for 2023-24. Each school that previously submitted this information to us has been contacted again as part of the 2024-25 budget setting process. If you believe you may qualify for this but have not been contacted, please email finschool.wnc@westnorthants.gov.uk

Legal implications

- 6.8 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

Risks

- 6.9 There is a risk that not funding split sites appropriately leads to a greater financial burden on some schools than others.
- 6.10 Implementing the full national funding formula does increase the funding being distributed to a small number of schools which is quite a significant change. This diverts funding away from all other schools and means the capping needs to be more than they would have been without this change. However, the only local flexibility allowed would be for WNC to diverge from the split site rates by 2.5% and this would not significantly impact the cap imposed.

Recommendations for Schools

- 6.11 That Schools consider the change to the Split Site Policy for inclusion in the formula at the full NFF rate.

7. Growth Fund Policy and Weighted Numbers and Falling Rolls

Purpose

- 7.1 The report is to update West Northamptonshire Schools Forum of the proposed Growth Fund Policy for 2024-25, the pupil number adjustments (weighted numbers) for new and growing schools and the growth fund budget to be included in the schools budgets for 2024-25.

Background

- 7.2 It is the Council's responsibility to propose suitable funding for the growth in schools and growth funding is provided within schools block DSG allocations for this purpose. It is Schools Forum's responsibility for setting the Growth Fund budget and policy. See extract below from the '[Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities](#)' document

Table 6: Powers relating to growth funding for schools

| Function | Local Authority | Schools Forum | DfE Role |
|---|-----------------|---------------|--|
| Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from: • funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy | Proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree LA proposal |

- 7.3 The growth funding can only be used to:
- Support growth in pre-16 pupil numbers to meet basic need
 - Support additional classes needed to meet the infant class size regulation
 - Meet the costs of new schools
 - weighted numbers added into the funding formula budget or;
 - from the Growth Fund during the year.
- 7.4 Schools receive this funding through one of two routes, either through estimates of pupils numbers added to their formula budget before the start of the year, referred to as 'weighted numbers' or a payment from the growth fund within the year.
- 7.5 Both methods are applied to Maintained and Academy Primary, Secondary and All-through Schools, in the same way. LAs **do require** Schools Forum agreement to add these increases in pupil numbers into the schools formula budget and we will be asking for Forum members to vote on this in December's Forum.

- 7.6 West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) applies weighted numbers in the funding formula to new schools, only where year groups are not already occupied for 2023-24 and propose to keep this policy the same going forward for 2024-25.

Proposed Pupil Number Adjustments to Formula Budgets for 2024-25

- Monksmoor, Daventry +30 - year 6
- Marie Weller, Towcester +30 - year 2
- Buckton Fields Primary +60 – year 2
- Northampton School +210 - year 8

School Growth Beyond 2024-25

- 7.7 All new schools planned for WNC are free academy schools:

- Overstone Leys Primary Sept 2025
 - Special School - Tiffield Sept 2025
 - Northampton area Secondary – 6FE/900 places total – Sept 2026*

* subject to the Secretary of State entering into a funding agreement with the Academy Trust.

Proposed Policy Updates

- 7.8 For the first time in 2024 to 2025 local authorities will be required to provide growth funding where a school or academy has agreed with the local authority to provide an extra class to meet basic need in the area (either as a bulge class or as an ongoing commitment). Funding, either through the growth fund, or by adjusting pupil numbers in the formula budgets, will need to be provided regardless of whether the additional class is within or outside of the pupil admission number (PAN). We are therefore updating the WNC policy to include reference to an additional class and remove the reference to PAN.
- 7.9 Schools will be eligible for growth funding when requested by the LA to open a new class, or where a new school is being established by the authority, the full pupil/class increase will be taken into account in determining the funding.
- 7.10 The rate of allocation has a minimum per pupil level set by the ESFA for the first time in the 2024-25 budgets. The current WNC policy minimum funding is above this rate. The allocations, which apply to all maintained schools and academies, will be funded based on the following criteria; The Head of Place Planning and Pupil Admissions will:

- confirm with the school if the lower (15 pupil increase) or higher (30 pupil increase) reimbursements rate will apply and
- confirm if a learning support assistant will be funded (we have removed the separate classroom support rate for 2024-25),
- confirm if a resource allocation for consumables is required,
- Funding will be issued for the period from the intake of pupils to the subsequent issue of the budget where the pupils are then included in the formula funding budget.
- This funding is calculated using Pupil Census data or schools admissions data. Where school admission data is used to calculate the increase in pupil numbers this will subsequently be verified by the following Pupil Census data and adjusted up or down as applicable.
- Additionally, the growth fund budget holder, in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Education, is also able to make payments to cover extraordinary growth events. For example, a school taking a number of asylum seekers where there is not yet funding provided by Government. If funding is later received from Government, this will be used to offset the growth fund payment to ensure there is no duplication of funding.

7.11 The level of funding provided to schools for growth is detailed in the tables below:

Table 7: Growth funding in primary school (LSA if required, 1 per class of 30).

| Primary Growth Fund Element | Annual Rates | 5/12ths Apr to Aug | 7/12ths Sept to Mar |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Teacher | 46,572 | 19,405 | 27,167 |
| LSA (per 1 class of 30) | 15,874 | 6,614 | 9,260 |
| Consumables | 1,065 | 444 | 621 |

Table 8: Growth funding rates in secondary (LSA if required, 1 per class of 30).

| Secondary Growth Fund Element | Annual Rates | 5/12ths Apr to Aug | 7/12ths Sept to Mar |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Teacher | 55,217 | 23,007 | 32,210 |
| LSA | 28,090 | 11,704 | 16,386 |
| Resource | 3,000 | 1,250 | 1,750 |

[Growth Fund Budget to be agreed by Schools Forum](#)

7.12 WNC propose to include the following within the schools budget consultation, with the proposed new schools and increases in classes to cope with increasing pupil numbers:

- The forecast expenditure required for 2024-25 is £1.49m

- Expected refund of recoupment for amount paid to academies for period April 2024 to August 2024 is £0.52m
- Budget requirement for commitments for 2024-25 is therefore £0.97m. See table 2 below for the schools due to receive additional classes of pupils in-year for 2024-25.
- Any surplus within the schools block, after the national funding formula has been applied to schools is proposed to be held in the growth fund to fund in year uncommitted growth and if unused, to cover high needs overspends.

Table 9: Committed use of the growth fund in 2024-25

| Phase and WNC Schools list | Growth Fund Funded (£) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Secondary Schools Abbeyfield School DSLV Duston School Kingsthorpe College Moulton Secondary NSG Wootton Park Thomas Beckett Weston Favel Requirement for known bulge not yet placed Forecast capacity growth from Sept 2023 | 970k |
| Primary Schools Marie Weller Primary Brackley junior Waynflete Primary Monksmoor Overstone Primary Radstone Fields Primary Roade Primary The Grange Hardingstone Academy | 523k |

Falling Rolls Fund

- 7.13 In 2024-25 the ESFA have removed the Ofsted requirement relating to LAs who operate a falling rolls fund. This means all schools of any rating could potentially qualify. The lack of equality around Ofsted ratings has often been a barrier to implementing a falling rolls policy.
- 7.14 However, there still remain requirements around the temporary nature of the fall in rolls and for this to be demonstratable from SCAP population data. The Head

of place planning and admissions reviewed the SCAP data and none of the schools we would expect to benefit from a falling rolls fund would be eligible. We have therefore not proposed to create a falling rolls fund for 2024-25.

Legal implications

7.15 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

Recommendations for Schools

7.16 Schools to consider and support the proposed growth fund and respond to the Schools Funding Consultation to give schools forum members your views.

8 Central Expenditure

- 8.1 There is a £0.27m decrease in the central schools services block for 2024-25 largely due to the 20% reduction (£0.35m) in the historical element of the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB). We are proposing to fund the historical combined services from CSSB reserves and not reduce the services or transfer additional costs to the general fund for 2024-25.
- 8.2 Table 21 shows the relevant responsibilities in relation to formula change which is taken from the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities, published in September 2018.

Table 10 responsibilities in relation to formula change

| Local Authority | Schools Forum | ESFA |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Proposes | Maintained School members decide | Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree Local Authority proposal |

Central Expenditure on Education Functions

- 8.3 The CSSB came into existence in April 2018 following the termination of the Education Services Grant (ESG). This funding is insufficient to fund the full cost of the Local Authority’s duties to all schools and results in West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) revenue general fund (and Northamptonshire County Council before this) picking up the remaining expenditure on central services for all schools i.e. results in these services being provided at no cost to schools.
- 8.4 The CSSB is made up of two elements:
 - Ongoing responsibilities funding which is formula driven (nationally distributed 90% via a per pupil rate current multiplied by October 2022 pupil census data but will be revised to October 2023 numbers in the December 2023 announcement).
 - Historical commitments funding allocated at levels carried forward from previous years. The DfE have been reducing the historic commitments funding from 2021-22 by 20% per annum. This reduction has been applied to the provisional 2024-25 CSSB funding and now takes the funding below the historical costs for pensions and PFI. We will therefore apply to the ESFA for protection for 2024-25 budgets.
- 8.5 The provisional total allocation is £3.67m compared to £3.94m in 2023-24 – a reduction of 6.8% (£0.27m).
- 8.6 Table 22 shows WNC’s proposals for the use of the CSSB funding in 2024-25, together with explanations of its use and changes from 2023-24.

Table 11 – WNC Provisional CSSB Expenditure £m

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Reserves | Change | Change % |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| Historical Commitments | £000 | £000 | | £000 | £000 |
| Combined Services - School Standards & Effectiveness | 0.065 | 0.000 | 0.065 | 0.000 | 0% |
| Combined Service - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board | 0.039 | 0.000 | 0.039 | 0.000 | 0% |
| Combined Services - MASH - Staffing | 0.057 | 0.000 | 0.057 | 0.000 | 0% |
| PFI – Greenfields Special School | 0.298 | 0.355 | 0.000 | 0.057 | 19.3% |
| Historical Teachers Pension pre-2013 | 1.288 | 1.335 | 0.000 | 0.047 | 3.6% |
| Total Historical Commitments | 1.746 | 1.691 | 0.160 | (0.055) | (3%) |
| Provisional Historical CSSB | | 1.397 | | (0.349) | (20%) |
| Estimate of historical protection required | | 0.294 | | | |

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | Change £ | Change % |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Ongoing Responsibilities | £000 | £000 | £000 | £000 |
| Schools Forum | 0.011 | 0.011 | 0.000 | 3.65% |
| Admissions | 0.509 | 0.532 | 0.023 | 4.50% |
| National Copyright Licenses | 0.400 | 0.415 | 0.015 | 3.65% |
| Corporate Overheads (e.g. Ex ESG retained LA duties) | 0.994 | 1.038 | 0.045 | 4.50% |
| Estate services | 0.000 | 0.168 | 0.168 | (100%) |
| Contribution to high needs overspend | 0.153 | 0.000 | (0.153) | (100%) |
| Combined Services - School Standards & Effectiveness | 0.012 | 0.000 | (0.012) | (100%) |
| Teacher's Pay and Pension Grant | 0.114 | 0.108 | (0.006) | (5.26%) |
| Total Ongoing Responsibilities | 2.193 | 2.273 | 0.080 | 3.63% |
| Provisional Ongoing CSSB | | 2.273 | | |
| Variance | | 0 | | |

-ve reduction in expenditure +ve increase in expenditure

8.7 The reduction of 20% on the historical block leaves an estimated funding gap of £0.45m against the expenditure requirement which will be met through the CSSB reserves of £0.16m to prevent additional burden on the general fund and 0.29m protection funding. We will request the protection funding from the ESFA to cover the unavoidable historical teachers pensions costs and special school PFI costs.

Legal implications

- 8.8 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

Risks

- 8.9 The main risks arising should Schools Forum not agree the recommendations are that the few remaining combined services will need to be either halted or funded from the general fund budget.

Recommendations for Schools

- 8.10 That Schools respond to this consultation to provide Schools Forum members with your opinions on the Central Expenditure proposals for 2024-25, funded from the CSSB as per Table 11

9 De-delegations

- 9.1 There are three de-delegations taken from maintained schools budgets at WNC for specific purposes:
- Redundancy costs for Maintained Schools
 - School Improvement Grant (SIG)
 - Trade Union Duties De-delegations
- 9.2 Maintained members of Schools Forum can decide on behalf of all maintained schools to de-delegate funding for the Authority to provide services to all maintained schools.
- 9.3 Funding cannot be de-delegated from academies however they can choose to procure these services from the Authority or an alternative provider.
- 9.4 Table 25 shows the Authority's proposals for de-delegation for maintained primary schools for 2024-25 and shows a comparison with the prior year.

Table 13 – Proposed per pupil De-delegations £

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 proposals | Change £ | Change % |
|---|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Redundancy costs for Maintained Schools | £4.00 | £4.00 | 0 | 0 |
| School Improvement Grant (SIG) | £5.50 | £5.50 | 0 | 0 |
| Trade Union Duties Option 1 | £3.21 | £3.21 | 0 | 0 |
| Trade Union Duties Option 2 | £3.21 | £3.53 | £0.32 | 10% |

- 9.5 Further details on the individual proposals
- 9.6 above can be found in the appendices to this report.
- [Financial implications](#)
- 9.7 These are set out in the report and in the appendices to the report.
- [Legal implications](#)
- 9.8 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

Risks

- 9.9 The main risks arising should Schools Forum not agree the recommendations are set out in the respective appendices for de-delegations.

Recommendations for Schools

That Maintained Schools members agree to the proposals for de-delegation as per Table 5 and the associated appendices to this report.

10 De-delegation for Trade Union Facility Time

Background

- 10.1 The structure of trade union facility time in West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) maintained schools (and academies who are part of the shared arrangements) is as follows:
- Each school may provide some facility time to employee trade union representative(s) from within their workforce for matters specific to that school.
 - Through de-delegation of budget for facility time, schools collectively fund senior employee representatives who operate across all schools within the shared arrangement. These representatives may also participate in centralised Education and Schools engagement and consultation (JCNF, DCF, H&S Forums etc.).
- 10.2 It is Schools forum that decides whether shared facility time arrangements operate across schools and they set funding levels annually. Maintained primary school forum representatives vote on behalf of their phase to transfer funding from delegated budgets to a central budget (held by the local authority) for trade union facility time. This is known as de-delegation.
- 10.3 Funding of facility time is paid for by the school at the same 'per pupil' rate.
- 10.4 The current forecast position on the trade union de-delegation is that it will be within the range of overspent by £6k to a surplus of £19k depending on the income generated by academy buy-in to the scheme. The 2023-24 budget was supported by a carry forward balance of £24k.
- 10.5 Trade Unions are very aware of the financial pressures that schools are experiencing and do not want to increase their rate above inflation. They are therefore proposing a 10% increase on the rate set in 2023-24 (which was a 10% reduced rate in as compared to 2022-23).
- 10.6 The arrangements for 2024-25 needs to be agreed at schools forum in December 2023 and this report sets out further information to assist schools in feeding back their views to schools forum to help them make that decision.

Trade Union Representatives and Facility Time in Schools

- 10.7 The ACAS Code of Practice 3 uses the term 'union representative' to mean an employee who has been elected or appointed in accordance with the rules of the independent union, to be a representative of all or some of the union's members in the school(s) where the union is recognised for collective bargaining purposes. This is intended to equate with the legal term 'trade union official'.
- 10.8 The recognised trade unions for the school workforce are as follows:

- Teachers: ASCL, NAHT, NASUWT, NEU, Voice
- Local Government Employees: GMB, Unison

10.9 The legislation relating to time off for trade union duties and activities applies to all employers, including those responsible for maintained schools, academies and free schools. There is significant flexibility for all schools to determine their own approaches to facility time to ensure positive workplace relations. Further information can be found in the non-statutory advice produced by the DfE [‘Advice on trade union facility time in schools’](#)

Options for West Northamptonshire Schools

10.10 **Option 1:** Continuation of the delegation as per 2023-24 at £3.21

10.11 **Option 2:** Acknowledge the salary inflation for 2023-24 and 2024-25 and increase the per pupil rate by 10% to £3.53.

10.12 The impact of no de-delegation on schools would mean that each individual school would be required to:

- Consult with all recognised TUs on all employment and health and safety matters
- Develop own agreement with TUs and any collective approach
- Make own arrangements for access to TU representatives to represent employees and to manage facility time within the school
- Have a potentially longer timeframe for resolution of employment relation issues
WNC officers are therefore not offering this as an option to Schools Forum in December.

10.13 The trade unions see the benefits of de-delegation funding as follows:

- Understanding of local context inc Academy TUPE transfers
- Ability to deal with casework (which continues to increase across West Northamptonshire)
- Effective relationships now established with the various HR Service providers that support schools (especially since the cessation of the WNC HR Advisory service)
- Fast, efficient and informal resolution meaning cases are resolved quickly and fairly by other means rather than Employment Tribunal.
- Reduced staff turnover & recruitment costs
- Cost effective TU representation
- Local knowledge to support local members
- Enables consistency of practice
- Least disruptive to education and cost effective means of organising facilities time; ensures no single school faces a disproportionate cost

Draft Budget Information

10.14 As noted above the forecast outturn for trade union activities in the current year is likely to be a deficit or small surplus, depending on income from academies.

This creates a different situation as compared to prior years. The forecast financial requirement for 2024-25 is £76.7k.

10.15 If the rate is kept at £3.21 per pupil as for 2023-24, then this would require a surplus from 2023-24 of £9k. If a 10% rate increase is applied to £3.53 then £2k of 2023-24 carry forward would be needed. This is shown in table 14.

10.16 Any surplus at year end will be ring fenced to TU facility time in 2025-26. Table 14: Trade Union Funding and expenditure 2021-22 to 2023-24 option 1 and 2.

| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2024-25 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | rate £2.10 | Option 1 | Option 2 |
| | | £3.21 | £3.53 |
| Forecast DSG Expenditure 2023-24 | 70,623 | 76,680 | 76,680 |
| de-delegated 2023-24 budget | -28,798 | -46,034 | -41,849 |
| carry forward | -23,529 | -28,343 | -25,767 |
| Academy income | -27,360 | -9,065* | -9,065* |
| Budget | -79,687 | -83,442 | -76,680 |
| Estimated underspend at end of year | -9,065* | -6,762 | 0 |

**Academy income is not guaranteed could range between negative £6k and positive £19k.*

Recommendations for Schools

10.17 To support this report and the officer suggested de-delegation rate for trade union facility time in the Schools Funding Consultation and to be aware that a vote will be required by Maintained School Members in December's forum meeting.

Financial implications

10.18 Without the Trade Union de-delegation schools and academies will have to employ and fully fund their own facility union rep for the time they need. It is likely to be more expensive purchasing directly than through the de-delegation.

Legal implications

10.19 The legislation on time off for trade union duties and activities applies to all employers, including those responsible for maintained schools, academies and free schools (Section 2.3). The continuation of de-delegation enables schools to meet these requirements.

Risks

- 10.20 If facility time is not organised centrally, each trade union can press for the release of a union representative at each individual school. The training requirement for these representatives could be significant, given the new role they would be expected to fulfil (e.g. employee, Health and Safety and Learning representative duties; attend training or learning activities; consultation and negotiation on employment related matters and the schools own HR policies).
- 10.21 There would be a risk of increased disruption in the school, for example, releasing a teacher from the classroom to accompany a member in a formal disciplinary/ grievance/performance/individual consultation meeting.

11 De-delegation for School Improvement Grant

Background

- 11.1 The school standards and effectiveness (SSE) team is funded from the central block of the dedicated schools grant. However, this is supplemented by funding from maintained primary schools (there are no maintained secondary schools) in order to support and challenge primary schools 'of concern' as defined by the DfE's 'schools causing concern' guidance – see [here](#) for the latest iteration, dated September 2022).
- 11.2 The School Effectiveness Team will provide appropriate support and challenge to 'promote high standards' in line with the DfE guidance.
- 11.3 The School Effectiveness Team has worked with all maintained schools and nurseries in the last year in accordance with the school effectiveness strategy and the needs of the school
- 11.4 As a result of measures taken, the positive impact of actions can be clearly seen. Examples of impact seen include:
- Leadership has been strengthened through support offered and clear actions for improvement identified and implemented.
 - Where leadership was a concern and the school was at risk of a requires improvement judgement at best, the LA Associate Headteacher acted as Interim Headteacher for two terms following the departure of the substantive Headteacher and maintained a 'good' judgement at inspection. In addition, the Associate headteacher was deployed in a further school following the resignation of the substantive head and worked to identify improvements requirements and continue to support the substantive head as they start their first term of headship.
 - Where schools were deemed at risk of an Inadequate OFSTED judgement, this has been averted and have achieved a judgement of RI or better.
 - Details of all OFSTED inspection results for maintained schools in Table 1 below

| LA Maintained | Outstanding | Good | Requires Improvement | SM/SW | Number of Pupils | % G/O |
|---------------|-------------|------|----------------------|-------|------------------|--------|
| Nursery | 26% | 74% | 0% | 0% | 301 | 100.0% |
| Primary | 9% | 84% | 7% | 0% | 13,497 | 92.9% |
| Secondary | - | - | - | - | 0 | - |
| Special | 82% | 18% | 0% | 0% | 224 | 100.0% |
| | 10% | 83% | 7% | 0% | 14,022 | 93.2% |

11.5 The SIG is an essential source of funding that enables the school effectiveness team to broker support for maintained schools requiring support. It funds:

- where required, partner headteachers, school leaders and other teaching staff to support school effectiveness work, provide mentoring for new heads and other staff within schools, to conduct school reviews, carry out bespoke support and monitor progress that schools make against agreed objectives.
- Where required, to provide executive head teacher arrangements on a 50:50 basis with the host school if needed for a 6 month (maximum) period (this fund is held back as a contingency if it is not used).
- The costs of an interim executive board chair.
- The cost of governing body review where a school is causing concern and the school is unable to afford it.
- school-to-school support plans approved by the head of school effectiveness.
- school-to-school support for targeted schools where outcomes or progress are low in target areas of phonics, reading, maths, SEND and pupil premium outcomes or there are concerns regarding teaching and learning, curriculum development or finance

11.6 This report describes the:

- purpose of the review;
- de-delegation agreed for the current year;
- use of SIG grant;
- impact of the work undertaken with the grant; and
- priorities.

11.7 Finally, recommendations for 2024-25 are made.

SIG funding and impact

11.8 The purpose of this review is to:

- identify what has been delivered through the SIG de-delegated funds;
- review if the de-delegation should continue in 2024-2025 and if so the amount per pupil that should be 'charged'.

11.9 For 2023-24 the primary SIG de-delegation was approved by West schools forum in December 2022. The rate was a de-delegation of £5.50 and a budget of £69k taken from schools individual budgets plus a carry forward of £187k. The forecast carry forward into 2024-25 is £0.

11.10 We propose to continue the rate of £5.50 for 2024-25 which will provide an overall budget of £69k for 2024-25.

11.11 The SIG is being used to target primary maintained schools which were judged by Ofsted to require improvement or special measures, or:

- have a data dip or downward trend in outcomes that would put them at risk of an adverse Ofsted inspection unless bespoke interventions were put in place;
- require improvement in pupil premium outcomes;
- require improvement in reading outcomes.

11.12 The SIG is used to:

- resource school-to-school support plans for those schools requiring intervention;
- support the placement of a partnership head teacher to support improvements in the school placed into special measures;
- fund several reviews of governance and pupil premium;
- pay partnership head teachers for their role in whole school reviews especially in those schools requiring improvement;
- Fund school-to-school support from partnership heads, other schools leaders and teaching staff, including SENDCos as and were required;

11.13 The impact has been:

- schools of concern have been identified earlier and timely and effective support put in place as confirmed through Ofsted feedback.
- Outcomes are in line with national averages at KS2 for maintained schools in all measures.
- Ofsted inspections have all been favourable in the schools supported by the DSG; where a maintained school did drop from good to Requiring improvement, concerns had been identified and support put in place and school improvement was already underway.
-

11.14 Future priorities are:

- to continue improve progress and attainment in combined measure at KS2
- improve phonics data in maintained schools to ensure that it is in line with national average
- maintain Ofsted outcomes for all maintained schools and Nurseries
- reduce the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils and those with send; and

11.15 It is currently estimated the SIG resources will be fully utilised in 2023-2024 and in 2024-25. In the unlikely event that the SIG is not fully utilised at the end of March 2025, the underspend would be rolled forward to be used in future years for SIG.

Recommendations

- 11.16 Schools are asked to agree the proposal to continue the rate of £5.50 per pupil for the school improvement grant and feed that back to Schools Forum members through the response to this consultation.

Financial implications

- 11.17 Should the consultation take place, and schools forum agree at its December meeting the de-delegation of £5.50 (or a close amended amount resulting from changes in the latest school census information), primary maintained schools will have £5.50 deducted from the schools individual budget as set through the funding formula.

Legal implications

- 11.18 Under schools forum regulations, the responsible local authority has the power to de-delegate funding from maintained schools, following agreement of its schools forum, or any direction by the secretary of state for education.

Risks

- 11.19 The risk, if schools forum does not agree the de-delegation, is that the authority will not have the resources required to support and challenge schools of concern. This is likely to result, at best, in standards failing to improve or, at worst, poorer pupil progress and achievement.

12 De-delegation for redundancy support

Background

- 12.1 The redundancy costs for maintained schools de-delegation enables maintained schools to collectively manage redundancy situations that are unaffordable for individual schools. It provides a means for maintained primary schools to access financial support when restructuring for the purpose of bringing their budget into balance.
- 12.2 This gives some protection to schools that need to adjust their staffing structures in order to manage their financial circumstances, potentially preventing them from incurring deficits and compounding their financial circumstances.

Accessing the Fund

- 12.3 Maintained Schools can submit a redundancy business case and a three-year budget plan for before and after planned redundancies (in an agreed format available on asking) to West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) HR and WNC Finance. If specific conditions are met, financial support is authorised by both the Director of Children's Services and the Section 151 Officer (or their deputies).
- 12.4 The standard level of support provided is 25% of the cost of redundancy or greater if the resulting cost leaves the school in a deficit budget in the year purely as a result of the redundancy costs.
- 12.5 Detailed Criteria for Accessing the fund:
- Must be a maintained primary school
 - Restructure needed to bring school budget into balance within next year or across the three-year business plan
 - Reserves not held that could cover cost of redundancies
 - The revised structure must balance the budget (or significant work must be in progress towards that end e.g. amalgamation)
 - Three-year business plan before and after restructure must be provided in business case (in full excel format)
 - Estimate of cost must be provided in business case, including pension strain.

Financial Position and Budget Requirement for 2023-24

- 12.6 In 2023-24 budget setting the rate set was £4.00 per pupil and this combined with the carry forward gave a budget of £220k. There have been two calls on this resource in 2023-24 with another 2 committed and we forecast a spend of £120k in 2023-24. There are a number of schools submitting 3 year plans to us with deficit budgets forecast for 2024-25 and schools with planned restructures who may fulfil the criteria for funding support. With this uncertainty but expected

demand for the support, we propose to continue the current rate for 2024-25 at £4 per pupil.

Table 16: 2022-23 Forecast Outturn Position on Redundancy De-delegation Budget

| | 2023-24 £k | 2024-25 estimate £k |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Budget | -52 | -52 |
| Carry forward | -168 | -100 |
| Spend estimate | 120.0 | 100.0 |
| Forecast outturn position (-ve = underspend) | -100 | -52 |

- 12.7 The contributions and therefore the budgets can reduce during the year if maintained schools convert to academy in year.
- 12.8 As this funding is de-delegated from individual maintained school budgets any underspend at the end of 2023-24 would be ring-fenced and carried forward to use in future years as necessary.

[Recommendations for Schools](#)

- 12.9 To support this report and the officer suggested de-delegation rate for redundancy funding for inclusion and to feed this back to the Schools Forum members through the response to this consultation. Maintained School Forum Members will then take a vote on this in December's forum meeting.

[Legal implications](#)

- 12.10 The legislation governing the Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities is available through the link below. This outlines that de-delegations require a vote by maintained schools forum members.

[Stat guidance template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- 12.11 For further information on the legislature for de-delegations please see [The School and Early Years Finance \(England\) Regulations 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk) under regulations 11(5) and 11(6).

[Risks](#)

- 12.12 The main risk is that the budget is not sufficient to support all schools that are restructuring due to financial difficulties. This could be mitigated by agreeing to carry forward any overspends to the following year to fund from the budget set for 2024-25.

13. Notional SEND Budgets

- 13.1 For 2024-25 budgets the ESFA require all LAs to review and their notional SEND policy, to follow certain principles and to consult on any changes with schools and schools forum.
- 13.2 Notional SEND budgets represent the amount of funding within the National Funding Formula that the ESFA expects schools will require to fund the additional support for pupils with SEND.
- 13.3 Government guidance/instruction on it is here: [The notional SEN budget for mainstream schools: operational guide 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1151227/SEN_budget_for_mainstream_schools_operational_guide_2024_to_2025.pdf)
- 13.4 There is no specific requirement of what percentages LAs should apply to specific characteristics of the formula to create the SEND budget but there are guidelines and two examples.
- 13.5 Current 2023-24 notional SEND budget is formulated by 9.1% or AWPU and 12.7% of all deprivation characteristics , but no other formula components.
- 13.6 The ESFA guidance suggests that:
- a small part of the basic entitlement funding (this is the AWPU) [currently have 9.1% = notional SEND, which gives £22.4m of the notional budget]
 - a larger part of deprivation funding, reflecting the higher prevalence of lower-level SEN amongst disadvantaged pupils [WNC currently have 12.7% = notional SEND, which gives £2.7m of the notional budget]
 - the majority or whole of the low prior attainment factor funding, as this is the best proxy we currently have for pupils with low-cost, high-incidence SEN [WNC currently don't use for notional SEND]
- 13.7 The guidance also suggests: Other elements of the funding formula may also be used – for example to reflect the prevalence of SEN amongst particular groups of pupils such as those who frequently move between schools, as captured by the mobility factor. A proportion of the lump sum could reflect any fixed costs of making SEN provision that would apply to all local schools or diseconomies of scale relevant to small schools.
- 13.8 For 2024-25 we are currently considering 3 options and present the impact of these on school notional SEND budgets in appendix B.

13.9 The options are:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Option 1 | As per 2023-24 but with LPA at 80% (as per second Government example) and with none applied to FSM (as per Government examples), AWPU set to a percentage which balances total overall notional SEND budget, which brings to 2.3% which also aligns with second Government example. |
| Option 2 | As per Government first example in guidance |
| Option 3 | As per Government second example in guidance |

14. Next Steps

- 14.1 This information and consultation document is first taken to Schools Forum for member input into the information and questions on the 18th October. It will then be updated and published on the 1st November.
- 14.2 The consultation will close on the 30th November and responses will be collated for Schools Forum in December.
- 14.3 School Forum members will be asked to vote in December 2023 on all aspects but have the authorising vote on specific items such as the central budget, growth fund and de-delegation.
- 14.4 In December the ESFA will publish the DSG settlement and small adjustments to the budgets will be made accordingly and the budgets submitted to the ESFA in mid-January. If there are any significant differences between the settlement and the provisional budgets, that impact the budgets being set, an extraordinary meeting of the schools forum may need to be scheduled for early January.
- 14.5 On receipt of the budget information, the ESFA check and review the budgets before authorising them in early February.

15. CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

- 15.1 We appreciate that a lot of the funding formula is now nationally driven and that there is less local choice each year. However we are still interested in your views and can let your views be known to the ESFA.
- 15.2 We are happy to accept consultation responses that do not answer each question from every section. If you only have one or two comments, then we would still like to hear from you.

[Section 5: National Funding Formula Budget](#)

Q5i) Split Site Policy: Do you agree with changing to the full national funding formula split site policy?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

[Section 6: Split site policy](#)

Q6i) Split Site Policy: Do you agree with changing to the full national funding formula split site policy?

- e) Yes
- f) No
- g) Other – please provide details
- h) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

Q6ii) Split Site Rates: Do you agree with using the full rates for the split site factor as provided in the national funding formula?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

[Section 7: Growth fund policy and weighted numbers](#)

Q7i) Growth Fund Policy: Do you agree the changes to the growth fund policy bringing it in line with the national requirements, reducing reference to pupil admission number and referring to additional classes rather than an increase of 15 pupils?

- a) Yes

- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

Q7ii) Growth Funding Rates: Do you agree with the update to the growth fund rates of 6.5%?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.
- e)

Q7iii) Growth Fund Budget: Do you agree with the growth fund budget level for 2024-25?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

Q7iv) Growth Fund Budget: Do you agree with the growth fund budget allocation for 2024-25?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

[Section 8: Central expenditure from the central schools services block](#)

Q8) Central: Are you in favour of the continuation of the central services that are partly funded by the dedicated services grant?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

[Section 10: Trade Union Facility Time de-delegation](#)

Q9) De-delegation for Trade Union Facility Time: Which option do you support:

- a) Option 1 £3.21 per pupil
- b) Option 2 £3.53 per pupil
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments – please use this space for any comment you would like to make

Section 11: School Improvement Grant de-delegation

Q10) De-delegation for School Improvement Grant: Do you support the proposed continuation of this de-delegation and the rate of £5.50 proposed?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

Section 12: Redundancy de-delegation

Q112 De-delegation for redundancy support: Do you support the proposed continuation of this de-delegation and the £4.00 rate proposed?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.

Section 13: Notional SEND consultation

Q13)i Notional SEND: Of the three options modelled, which would be your preferred option?

- a) Option 1
- b) Option 2
- c) Option 3
- d) No preferred option

Q13)ii Notional SEND: Do you agree with the notional SEND budget being changed?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Other – please provide details
- d) Comments - please use this space for any comments you would like to make.