

West Northants Schools Forum: 19 October 2021

Agenda Item 5b

School improvement group (SIG) de-delegation from maintained primary schools

Appendix B – School Improvement Grant

1 Background

1.1 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 2020).

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

- a team of well-qualified and experienced head teachers (partnership heads) who work with senior school improvement Managers (SSIMS) on school reviews, carry out bespoke support and monitor progress that schools make against agreed objectives.
- 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).
- costs of an interim executive board chair.
- 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 learning and 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.

1.3 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.

1.4 Finally, recommendations for 2022-23 are made.

2 SIG funding and impact

2.1 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 2022-2023 and if so the amount per pupil that should be 'charged'.

2.2 For 2021-22 the primary SIG de-delegation was approved by West shadow schools forum in October 2020. The effect was a de-delegation of £7.50. It has generated £302,000, comprising a budget of £104,000 and a carry forward of £198,000.

2.3 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.

2.4 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, SLEs and NLEs;
- Provide initial funding for the Northamptonshire collaborative reading project launch;

2.5 The impact has been:

- schools of concern have become more focused on improving outcomes compared to national benchmarks and comparing their pupils' outcomes with those of similar pupils in similar schools, thereby raising aspiration of what can be achieved;
- outcomes in maintained schools have improved over 2018-19 in all ks2 measures except progress in maths;
- the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard and above in reading has risen to above national in maintained schools;
- the improvement in reading at both expected standard and greater depth is 3% nationally and 5% across all Northamptonshire's schools;
- Ofsted inspections have all been favourable in the schools supported by the DSG; and
- although many improvements are evident this year, standards remain below national and below that of statistical neighbours for many schools.

(Note: data on pupil premium outcomes are not available presently).

2.6 Future priorities are:

- continue to raise aspiration using FFT benchmark data;
- improve progress and attainment in reading and phonics;
- accelerate the rate of improvement in primary outcomes at key stages 1 and 2;
- reduce the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils and those with send; and
- work with teaching schools and MATS to improve outcomes in primary maths for all pupils.

2.7 It is currently estimated the SIG resources will be fully utilised in 2021-2022. In the unlikely event that the SIG is not fully utilised at the end of March 2022, the underspend would be rolled forward to be used in future years for SIG.

3 Proposed next steps

3.1 The council intends to consult upon its intention to ask maintained schools' representatives to agree the same level of de-delegation for this purpose as for the current year - £7.50 per pupil. This will generate a budget of £104k (based on the October 2020 census – this will be updated before schools forum is asked to vote on this proposal).

3.2 Council officers propose to include the SIG de-delegation in the School Budget consultation with the following questions:

1) do you agree with the proposal for de-delegation to be made for maintained primary schools to create a school improvement grant?

If yes

2) Do you agree with the proposed rate of £7.50 per pupil

3) If not what rate would you consider reasonable?

4 Recommendations

4.1 Schools forum members are asked to agree the consultation proposals and questions, or propose alternatives.

5 Financial implications

5.1 Should the consultation take place, and schools forum agree at its December meeting the de-delegation of £7.50 (or an amended amount resulting from the latest school census information), primary maintained schools will have £7.50 deducted from the age weighted pupil unit (AWPU).

6 Legal implications

6.1 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.

7.1 Risks

7.1 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.

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