

South Gloucestershire Council

SCHOOLS FORUM

1 DECEMBER 2022

DEDELEGATION OF FUNDING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES TO LA MAINTAINED SCHOOLS 2023-2034

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Schools Forum with the proposed approach for seeking the views and agreement of local authority maintained to de-delegation of funding in 2023/2024, which is required to meet the cost of providing essential school improvement and related services to those schools.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that local authority-maintained school representatives of Schools Forum consider the proposed approach set out in this report and support the approach outlined.

Background and Current Position

3. The local authority (LA) has a duty to make effective arrangements for monitoring the performance of local authority-maintained schools in relation to the quality and essential aspects of the education on offer. This is in order that the LA not only understands how well schools are performing, but is able then facilitate continuous improvement, manage risks to the quality of the offer, and, when necessary, broker services for schools requiring support.
4. Since 2017, local authorities had been in receipt of the local authority school improvement monitoring and brokering grant (LAMB grant) which has been provided to allow LAs to continue to monitor performance of maintained schools, broker school improvement provision, and intervene as appropriate. However, on 29 October 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) consulted on proposals to reform how local authority school improvement functions are funded. The proposal was removal of the LAMB grant and a suggestion that in future, the costs should be covered by local authority-maintained schools through de-delegation.
5. The reforms would be implemented in two phases, with approximately 50% of the grant being removed in a first phase implemented in the 2022/2023 financial year, and 100% of the grant removed in the second phase, in 2023/2024.
6. Following consultation, the reforms were implemented in 2022/2023 by DfE as they had stated.

7. South Gloucestershire local authority-maintained schools were consulted in 2021/2022 to seek their views of the proposed de-delegation arrangements for 2022/2023 and the outcome was full support to recover the equivalent of 50% of the grant from schools in order that existing arrangements for delivering school improvement services could continue without the need to make changes. For schools this involved a contribution equivalent to £7.95 per pupil.
8. It is now necessary to determine if schools wish to continue with de-delegation in 2023/2024 which would require full recovery of the equivalent level of funding if services continue to be provided under the existing arrangements.
9. If there are no changes to the services provided then, as the number of maintained schools has not changed during the current financial year, recovery of the equivalent of 100% of the grant previously received, would equate to £15.90 per pupil.
10. However, if schools do not support de-delegation, then the school improvement services currently available will be impacted. If the funding provided by schools is less than that previously available, services will have to be withdrawn or cost of providing met in a different way, for example charges to schools. The funding is used to support the following:
 - Leadership of school improvement activity
 - Challenges and support arrangements for schools via the school improvement framework
 - Activity to support readiness for inspection and support during inspection
 - Brokerage services for priority schools
 - School reviews
 - Support for intervention
 - Planning, commissioning, and delivering training and support for professional development
 - Conferences including cost of key speakers

Proposed Approach

11. An on-line engagement with headteachers has been arranged for Wednesday 7th December and this will involve a presentation by officers and allow schools to provide initial feedback and raise queries. The information available at the meeting will also be sent to all local authority-maintained schools as a consultation document together with a survey to collect school leader views. Schools will have until Thursday 22 December to respond.
12. Following the end of the consultation period, officers will consider all the feedback provided by school leaders through the survey and will use this to formulate an offer for service arrangements including arrangements for funding in 2023/2024. The proposed approach will be shared with school leaders and will be presented to Schools Forum for the consideration of representatives at the meeting of the forum in January.
13. In summary the next steps following the meeting today are:

7th December: Engagement session with school leaders
7th December: Consultation and survey schools to seek views
22nd December: Consultation ends/deadline to respond to survey
11 January: Complete analysis of responses and formulate proposal
12 January: Provide details of proposal to all schools
12 January: Report available for Schools Forum
19 January: Schools Forum meet to consider report and make decision on way forward

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