



TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS' FORUM

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Notice of Meeting – Schools' Forum (PROVISIONAL)

A meeting of the Schools' Forum will be held on **June 20, 2024, at 5pm. This will be held virtually using Microsoft Teams, the link will be sent via email.** The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA	
1.	Welcome and apologies. <i>Chair</i>
2.	Minutes of the meeting held on 7 th March 2024, including matters arising. <i>Chair</i>
3.	Schools' Forum Membership Update <i>Chair</i>
4.	DSG Outturn 2023/24 <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>
5.	Maintained school balances 2023/24 and budgets 2024/25 <i>Schools Business Partner</i>
6.	DSG Budget 2024/25 <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>
7.	SEND update – Verbal Report <i>Strategic Head of Special Education</i>
8.	Scheme for Financing for Schools update <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>
9.	Review of the Schools' Forum constitution <i>DSG Finance Business Partner</i>
10.	Agenda items for next meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSG budget setting strategy for 2025/26 • Initial proposals for school funding formula for 2025/26 • Budget monitoring 2024/25 month 6 • SEND update
11.	Any other business

Next Meeting: September 26, 2024, at 5pm (TBC) – To be held virtually via Teams

Minutes of Schools' Forum Meeting

7 March 2024

Members Present

Richard Rolfe – Governor at Micklands (Chair); Rebecca Brown – Head of Park Lane Infants; Justine McMinn – Head Teacher of EP Collier; Jo Budge - Executive Head Teacher of Reading Early Years Schools Federation; Annal Nayyar – Finance Director of Baylis Trust (Reading Girls); Symon Cooke – Head Teacher of The Avenue; Isabelle Sandy – Business Manager of Kendrick; Dorothy Company – Business Manager of King’s Academy Prospect; Ita McGullion – Manager of Kennet Day Nursery; Cathy Woodcock – Finance Director of Reading School

Apologies

Brian Grady – Director of Education

In attendance

Lara Patel – Executive Director of Children’s Services; Ann McDonnell – Business Manager of Blessed Hugh Faringdon; Steven Davies – Strategic Finance Business Partner; Grahame Craig – Interim DSG Business Partner; Clare Warren – School Finance Business Partner; Roxanna Glennon – Strategic Lead - SEND; Lara Manning – Accountancy Assistant.

	Item	Notes
1	Welcome and apologies – Chair	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Grahame Craig read out the protocol for the virtual meeting and voting was confirmed for: Item 2 – the approval of the minutes Recording of the meeting commenced. The recording will be retained until the minutes have been approved.
2	Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024 and matters arising - Chair	Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting from 18 January 2024. Action Point – Letter to DfE re-High Needs Block – The Chair had been tasked with writing to the DfE for an explanation as to why the increase in the High Needs Block was so low given the current challenges. RR confirmed that the letter has been drafted, but not sent. A copy of the letter will be shared with Forum members.

		<p>Meeting between Brian Grady & Cranbury College re Behaviour Support Service – In BG’s absence, Roxanna Glennon confirmed that there had now been two separate meetings on this issue.</p>
3	Schools’ Forum Membership Update - Chair	GC confirmed that there had been a resignation at January’s meeting, but that there were no further updates. Membership will be reviewed at the June meeting.
4	DSG Budget Monitoring 2023-24 Summary – DSG Finance Business Partner	<p>Grahame Craig presented</p> <p>This report shows the current forecast position of the Dedicated Schools’ Grant (DSG) for the four blocks – Schools, Central School Services, Early Years and High Needs.</p> <p>Appendix 1 shows both the current and forecast budget up to period 10, whilst Appendix 2 shows a breakdown of the individual lines in Appendix 1.</p> <p>High Needs’ Block – There is a forecast overspend of just over £8m. This compares to the deficit for 2022/23, which was £5.3m. This gives a cumulative total of just over £13.5m.</p> <p>Schools’ Block – The budget is £51m. It is predicted that there will be an underspend of £840k. This is due to the Growth Fund underspend. The Schools’ Forum has previously agreed to carry this underspend into 2024/25 due to the unknown requirements going forward for new schools.</p> <p>Central Schools’ Block – There is currently a £7k difference but this may even itself out.</p> <p>Early Years’ Block – This block is currently showing a £308k underspend. This may fluctuate as it is based on actuals. The LA is still waiting to receive the final figures for this block.</p> <p>The overspend in the High Needs’ Block is offset slightly by the forecast underspends within both the Schools’ and Early Years’ Blocks. This brings the total predicted in-year underspend for the High Needs Block to £7.1m.</p> <p>The underspend is due to the top-up costs. There has been a 13% increase in the average cost of a top-up, rising to £18.4k since the start of the financial year. There is also a 5% increase in the number of top-up places that are being funded. This is an additional 86 places since the start of the financial year. Approximately 90% of this block is payments for statutory top-ups. These figures will be included in the Chair’s letter to the DfE, regarding the low increase in funding for this Block.</p>

		<p>Additional funding of £218, 583 has been granted by the DfE to help those schools in deficit. The best use for this funding was discussed, such as putting it towards the High Needs Block, buying extra support for schools or distributing it directly to schools. The final decision was to passport this funding. It will, therefore, be distributed according to the same mechanism that the DfE has used to allocate the funding. Point 12 shows a list of nine schools, which will benefit from this additional funding.</p> <p>Isabelle Sandy asked if it is known why these nine schools require this additional support. She wondered if there were common issues between the schools. She also queried why the High Needs costs had risen to 13% when inflation has come down. GC clarified that although inflation is decreasing, providers are not reducing their costs. The LA is putting a number of initiatives in place as part of the Delivering Better Value Programme to try and reduce these costs. Discussions are being held with the providers themselves and alternative provision is being sourced.</p> <p>Steve Davies confirmed that there are a number of common themes between those schools in deficit. Four of the nine schools, which will benefit from this additional funding are nurseries, which struggled seriously during the coronavirus pandemic and have still not recovered. It is hoped that, due to the imminent entitlement changes in the Early Years' Sector plus a lot of investment from the Government, the nurseries will now manage to recover and return to a steadier position.</p> <p>An additional factor that is causing these deficits is that North Reading is facing pupil shortages. This has affected three of the schools for the last two years. The Falling Rolls Fund has been created to try and help these schools. SD further clarified that Thameside Primary has a high number of EHCPs (20%), which has contributed to their deficit.</p> <p>Ita McGullion queried whether the two nursery schools in North Reading also faced pressures from falling rolls. SD agreed that New Bridge Nursery does, but was not sure about Caversham Nursery. Jo Budge stated that the historical deficit for the two nurseries in the north is mainly due to the January 2021 Census when they were not paid for that term. Caversham Nursery was also flooded in 2023 and this caused the nursery to close for several months. The nurseries are confident that the two year old funding coming in April 24 will help to improve numbers.</p>
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5	DSG High Needs Budget 2024-25 – Strategic Finance Business Partner	<p>Steve Davies presented.</p> <p>Each March, the Schools’ Forum is made aware of the High Needs’ Budget for the following financial year. As is already known, the funding for 2024/25 is not considered to be sufficient, which is why the Chair will be writing to the DfE to query this. The increase was 3.1% overall, or £773k. The very minimum that all LAs will receive is 3%. Individual bandings will be increased by 3.1% as shown in Appendix 1. This will affect both Academy and Maintained schools.</p> <p>Table 2 details the provisional budget for 2024/25. The budget has been split into three main areas: Centrally Retained budget, Placement funding and EHCPs top ups. The Centrally Retained budget relates to funding that Brighter Futures for Children uses for certain teams and contracts such as Sensory Consortium. This area also includes Inclusion funding that is paid out during the year to schools. The Placement funding relates to special schools, resource units and Cranbury College. The ESFA takes money from the LA to pass on to the Academies. The main part of Table 2 is the Top up Funding. This has been split into certain types of top ups.</p> <p>The budget for 2024/25 has been increased according to what has been forecast will be spent in this area. A £7.5m pressure has, therefore, been forecast for 2024/25. The budget has been set at £39m, but Reading is only expecting to receive £32m. This includes the savings target of £5m that has been incorporated into the Deficit Management Plan. Projects and pilots are being put in place to try and reduce costs as much as possible. An explanation for each of the lines has been included in the paper. SD confirmed that some of the ARPs are being funded by Placement rather than a top up. A lot of Resource Units are now becoming ARPs.</p> <p>Roxanna Glennon confirmed that the most recent pilot is the Early Intervention Funding Pilot. This will start in April 2024 and will be non-statutory funding available for all nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils in maintained schools and nurseries, plus academies. It will be costed at £4k per pupil per annum. This will be allocated via cluster working, which will be managed by the RISE service. This scheme was originally due to be launched in September 2024, but has been brought forward to April 2024. This scheme has been trialled by other LAs and has had a significant, positive impact for pupils as it has enabled them to receive early support quicker than through the EHCNA process. A panel will be held six times a year for this scheme.</p>
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		<p>Ita McGullion questioned why Kennet Day Nursery (KDN) was not included. RG explained that KDN could apply for Inclusion Funding. Nurseries that are attached to a maintained school are not able to apply for Inclusion Funding. Those nurseries that can apply for Inclusion Funding, can receive up to £7k, but it is allocated case-by-case. It was decided that the Panel for the Early Intervention Funding would not be able to review case-by-case so the funding has been set at £4k. This is also similar to the amount that pupils who go through the EHCNA process receive.</p>
6	<p>DSG Early Years Budget 2024-25 - Strategic Finance Business Partner</p>	<p>Steve Davies presented.</p> <p>This paper recaps the information from January's School Forum. The unit rates were shown based on the information that was available at that time and the central costs of the Early Years' block were agreed. The rates have not changed from January 2024. Table 1 provides a bit more detail on the 2024/25 Early Year's budget.</p> <p>IS wondered how Reading's rates compared nationally or to their nearest neighbours. SD explained that every authority has to complete a Section 251 return. There is a section for Early Years, which is completed at the end of April. Details are then released in September. Every LA will have a different unit rate because it is based on historic data and area cost adjustments. SD suggested that Reading's rates were favourable in comparison to other LAs. Jo Budge confirmed that she is aware that Reading is either comparable to or slightly higher than other LAs.</p>
7	<p>Schools' Forum Proposed Meeting Dates & Indicative Agendas – Chair</p>	<p>Richard Rolfe presented</p> <p>This paper provides the suggested dates for the 2024/25 School Forum Meetings, as well as the agenda items for each proposed dates. The dates have tried to mirror those for 2023/24. SD explained that the Autumn Term meeting, which is usually held in October, has been brought forward to September. This should work better with regards to the funding announcements that are usually received in September.</p> <p>It is intended that meetings will continue to be held online.</p>

		<p>The proposed dates are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 June 2024 • 26 September 2024 • 5 December 2024 • 16 January 2025 • 6 March 2025
8	Agenda Items for Next Meeting	<p>The next meeting will be held on 20 June 2024 at 5pm as a virtual meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSG Outturn 2023/24 • Maintained School Balances 2023/24 and Budgets 2024/25 • Review of the Schools' Forum Constitution • DSG Budget 2024/25 and update on deficit recovery plan • Scheme for Financing for Schools update • SEND update
9	Any Other Business	<p>There were no other items for discussion. RR thanked all attendees.</p> <p>The meeting finished at 5.40pm.</p>

Summary of Actions Outstanding

SF Date & Item no.	Action Required	Responsible Person



Reading Schools' Forum

June 20, 2024

Agenda Item 4

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
Outturn 2023/24

For decision

For discussion

For information

SUMMARY

This report details the final outturn of the DSG in 2023/24 and the overall deficit to be carried forward to 2024/25.

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VERSION

Version number 1

DATE

June 20, 2024

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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 NOTE: The overall DSG deficit increased by £5.941m within 2023/2024.
- 1.2 NOTE: The individual block carry forwards are as follows:
- Schools Block £2.391m underspend on growth funding to meet requirements in 2024/25 and beyond.
 - Central Block was on budget.
 - Early Years Block £0.599m underspend to be set aside as contingency and support for 2024/25 early years budget.
- 1.3 NOTE: The High Needs Block deficit has increased to £12.395m

2. Background

- 2.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant and can only be spent on school/pupil activity, as defined by the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations (2018).
- 2.2 The DSG is split between four different funding blocks - schools, central school services, early years, and high needs. Each Council's allocation is largely based upon actual pupil numbers from the October pupil count proceeding the actual financial year. Although separate allocations are received for each block, transfers are allowed between blocks but subject to certain restrictions.
- 2.3 Most of the grant is allocated to schools – the Individual School's Budget (ISB) or delegated budget – this is mainly formula driven; the remainder is the Centrally Retained School's Budget – the non-delegated budget.
- 2.4 The LA receives its DSG allocation gross (including allocations relating to academies), and then the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) recoups the actual budget for these settings to pay them direct, leaving a net or LA allocation.
- 2.5 A DSG deficit must be carried forward to be managed from future DSG income, and LAs will not be able to fund any part of the deficit from sources other than the DSG, unless the Secretary of State authorises the LA not to do this. Although Schools' Forum will no longer approve the carry forward of the deficit, LAs will still need to work closely with their Forum on their plans for managing DSG deficits. Underspends on the DSG are carried forward to support the future year's school's budget.
- 2.6 The LA must ensure that DSG is correctly spent and must report the outturn position in a separate table within its Statement of Accounts. The outturn position is also submitted to ESFA.

3. DSG Outturn 2022/23

- 3.1. The DSG accounts for 2023/24 have now been closed. Table 1 summarises the overall final position compared to the original and revised budget.
- 3.2. Appendices 1 and 2 provide more detail for each funding block.
- 3.3. The overall final position is an in-year deficit of £5.941m; bringing the overall deficit total to £9.404m.

Table 1: Summary Outturn Position – 2023-2024

	23-24 BUDGET ALLOCATION	ACTUAL OUTTURN	B/FWD from 22-23	DSG VARIANCE
	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)
Schools Block				
<i>Expenditure</i>	51.473	50.629	(1.547)	(2.391)
<i>DSG Income</i>	(51.473)	(51.473)	0	0
Over/(Under)	0	(0.845)	(1.547)	(2.391)
Central Schools Block				
<i>Expenditure</i>	1.133	1.140	(0.007)	(0.000)
<i>DSG Income</i>	(1.133)	(1.133)	0	0
Over/(Under)	(0.000)	0.007	(0.007)	(0.000)
Early Years Block				
<i>Expenditure</i>	13.277	12.967	(0.289)	(0.599)
<i>DSG Income</i>	(13.277)	(13.277)	0	0
Over/(Under)	0	(0.310)	(0.289)	(0.599)
High Needs Block				
<i>Expenditure</i>	26.340	33.428	5.307	12.395
<i>DSG Income</i>	(26.340)	(26.340)	0.000	0.000
Over/(Under)	0	7.089	5.307	12.395
Total – All Blocks				
Total Expenditure	92.223	98.165	3.463	9.404
Total DSG Income	(92.223)	(92.223)	0	0
Over/(Under) Spent	0	5.942	3.463	9.404

3. Variances

- 3.4. Schools Block (SB)
 - The school's block has an in-year underspend of £0.845m, all of which relates to the growth fund. This will be added to the £1.547m carried forward from 2022/23 and has already been considered in setting the growth fund budget for 2024/25 giving a total carry forward balance of £2.391m. This fund will also be used to support

schools financially with any falling rolls which meet the criteria as agreed in March 2024. This is an annual agreement by the Schools' Forum.

3.5. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)

- There is no carry forward for this block.

3.6. Early Years Block (EYB)

- There is an in-year underspend of £0.310m for centrally retained spends as well as payments made to Early Years providers in 2023-24. This is due to lower numbers that originally budgeted for across all Early Years entitlements.
- There continues to be a reduction in nursery pupil numbers in census numbers from January 2023 to January 2024 for 2-year-olds but a small increase in numbers within the 3 year old sector. We are not anticipating a DfE Early years clawback of funding. This will be confirmed in July 2024 when we will receive the revised and final DSG allocations.
- The total expenditure and revised income to be received gives an in-year surplus of £0.310m in 2023/24. Adding this to the bought forward balance of £0.289m from 2022/23 presents a carry forward balance within this block of £0.599m to be used within 2024/25.

3.7. High Needs Block (HNB)

- The High Needs Block deficit brought forward from 2022/23 was £5.307m and has increased by £7.088m to £12.395m at the end of 2023/24.
- The in-year variance is £7.088m more than budgeted for and Table 2 provides a breakdown of this variance.

Table 2: Summary of HNB Overspend

Reason for HNB Overspend	£m
Top up funding	4.424
Place funding	0.792
Other budgets	1.871
Total Expenditure over spend	7.088

- The top-up budget for 2023/24 was set based on the number and cost of top ups as at February 2023 and predicted increase (note that not all EHCPs result in a top up payment). The original high needs budget assumed an increase in the deficit of £0.351m which has not been achieved due to the greater outturn overspend.
- As of November 2023, there were 1956 pupils with an EHCP supported by Brighter Futures. This represented a 12% increase from January 2023, with a projection of 2194 supported pupils by September 2024. The impact of the introduction of the RISE programme was to level off this increase. At the end of the 2023/24 financial year there were only 2003 pupils with an EHCP being supported.

- Table 3 shows the budget variances by type of placement.

Table 3: Top Up Budgets 2023/24

	ORIGINAL BUDGET (£m)	ACTUAL EXPENDITURE £m	VARIANCE (£m)
Special Schools & PRU	11.346	13.582	2.236
Resource Units	0.881	1.054	0.174
Mainstream	3.220	3.689	0.469
Early Years	0.066	0.080	0.013
FE Colleges	1.801	2.156	0.355
Independent/NMSS	5.197	6.221	1.024
Other Alternative Placements	0.936	1.120	0.184
Hospital incl. Tier 4	0.196	0.166	(0.030)
TOTAL	23.644	28.068	4.424

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary DSG Outturn Report 2023/2024

Appendix 2 - Additional Information for Appendix 1 Table

Appendix 3 – Dedicated Schools Grant Note to the Accounts 2023-24

Appendix 1 – Summary DSG Outturn Report 2023/24

Line Ref.	Description	Original Budget £m	Change £m	Current Budget £m	Actual £m	Variance £m
	Schools Block					
1	Individual Schools Budget - Maintained Schools	49.728	0	49.728	49.728	0
2	Growth Fund	1.140	0	1.140	1.295	-0.845
3	Behaviour Support Services (de-delegation)	0.286	0	0.286	0.286	0
4	Staff costs supply cover (trade unions) (de-delegation)	0.047	0	0.047	0.047	0
5	School Effectiveness team (de-delegation)	0.188	0	0.188	0.188	0
6	Statutory/regulatory Duties (ESG) (de-delegation)	0.084	0	0.084	0.084	0
	Sub Total Schools Block Net Expenditure	51.473	0	51.473	50.629	-0.845
	Central Schools Services Block					
7	Contribution to combined budgets	0.253	0	0.253	0.253	0
8	School admissions	0.289	0	0.289	0.289	0
9	Servicing of Schools' Forum	0.020	0	0.020	0.020	0
10	Prudential borrowing costs	0.026	0	0.026	0.026	0
11	Other Items (copyright licences)	0.128	0	0.128	0.135	0.007
12	Statutory/regulatory Duties (ESG)	0.417	0	0.417	0.417	0
	Sub Total Central School Services Block Net Expenditure	1.133	0	1.133	1.140	0.007
	Early Years Block					
13	Early Years Funding	12.489	0	12.489	13.220	0.731
14	Support for inclusion	0.050	0	0.050	0.000	-0.050
15	SEN support services	0.438	0	0.438	0.417	-0.020
16	Central expenditure on early years entitlement	0.301	0	0.301	0.301	0
17	EY Supplementary Grant	0.000	0	0.000	-0.971	-0.971
	Sub Total Early Years Block Net Expenditure	13.277	0	13.277	12.967	-0.310
	High Needs Block					
18	SEN placements - Maintained Schools (place funding)	1.746	0	1.746	2.539	0.792
19	Top-up Funding - Resource Units	0.881	0	0.881	1.054	0.174
20	Top-up Funding - Mainstream	3.220	0	3.220	3.689	0.469
21	Top-up Funding - Early Years	0.066	0	0.066	0.080	0.013
22	Top-up Funding - FE Colleges	1.801	0	1.801	2.156	0.355
23	Top-up Funding - Independent/NMSS	5.197	0	5.197	6.221	1.024
24	Top-up Funding – PRU & Special Schools	11.346	0	11.346	13.582	2.236
25	Top-up Funding - Other Alternative Placements	0.936	0	0.936	1.120	0.184
26	Hospital Education Services	0.196	0	0.196	0.166	-0.030
27	Additional high needs targeted - Inclusion mainstream	0.484	0	0.484	0.489	0.005
28	SEN Support Services	0.659	0	0.659	0.700	0.041
29	Support for Inclusion	0.550	0	0.550	0.456	-0.094
30	SEN Transport	0.100	0	0.100	0.100	0
31	Therapies and other health related services	0.520	0	0.520	0.520	0
32	Central Services	0.213	0	0.213	0.213	0
33	Medical Tutoring	0.050	0	0.050	0.000	-0.050
34	Hard-to-Place Funding	0.050	0	0.050	0.086	0.036
35	Children Missing Education	0.146	0	0.146	0.146	0
36	Teachers pay & pension grants to special schools/PRU	0.296	0	0.296	0.170	-0.126
37	Repayment of DSG deficit from previous year	-2.119	0	-2.119	-0.059	2.060
	Sub Total High Needs Block Net Expenditure	26.339	0	26.339	33.428	7.089
	Total All Blocks Net Expenditure	92.223	0	92.223	98.165	5.942

Appendix 2 – Additional Information for Appendix 1 Table

SCHOOLS BLOCK

Line 1 - Individual School Budget – Schools formula budget for maintained Primary and Secondary.

Line 2 - Growth fund - The growth fund budget is for new/growing schools or bulge classes in response to basic need and is allocated to schools from the autumn term based on the criteria set by Schools' Forum.

Line 3 - Behaviour Support Services – Passported to Cranbury College to supply this service.

Line 4 - Staff Costs to Supply Union Cover – Pays for Union support and supply cover for staff engaging in union duties.

Line 5 - School Effectiveness team – To fund staff and projects within the service.

Line 6 – Statutory/regulatory duties - formally known as the Education Services Grant, for statutory duties carried out by the LA on behalf of all maintained schools such as internal audit, year-end accounts, central reporting, monitoring compliance with scheme for financing schools.

CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK

Line 7 - Combined Budgets - covers School Effectiveness Team, MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), virtual school for looked after children, Early Help – children action teams that covers family workers, Welfare, CAMHs and Education Psychology.

Line 8 - School Admissions – contribution towards the statutory admissions service for all Reading Schools.

Line 9 - Servicing of Schools Forum – contribution towards officer time for preparation of reports and attendance at meetings; cost of room hire; arranging meetings, minute taking, web site.

Line 10 - Prudential Borrowing costs – Borrowing costs for schools' capital programme has historically been and will be funded by borrowing over many years. This is a small contribution to the overall borrowing costs.

Line 11 – Other Items – Copyright licences – national contract, purchased on behalf of all schools.

Line 12 – Statutory/regulatory duties - formally known as the Education Services Grant, for duties carried out by the LA for all schools, including academies. Includes DSG budgets, school funding formula, payments to schools, statutory returns, education welfare, asset management.

EARLY YEARS BLOCK

Line 14 - Early Years formula funding – 2, 3 & 4-year-old free entitlement funding including deprivation and early years pupil premium and other early years grants relating to maintained nurseries and disability.

Line 15 - Support for Inclusion – Early Years Cluster funding and central staffing in Education department. Supports inclusion of children in early year's settings, supporting inclusive practices and resources that enable young children with SEND to have their needs met in these settings. There is also a contribution from the high needs block (in line 37).

Line 16 - SEN Support Services – Portage and contribution to Dingley.

Line 17 - Central Expenditure on Children under 5 – Early Years team including compliance, data, sufficiency and performance.

HIGH NEEDS BLOCK

Line 18 - SEN Placements – Place funding for pre-16-maintained Resource Units (first £6k), maintained Special Schools (first £10k).

Line 19 to 21 - Top-up funding for schools - EHCP top-ups for nursery, primary, secondary, special and alternative provisions within any LA that has a Reading financial responsibility for the EHCP. This also includes Pupils without EHCPs in Pupil Referral Units

Line 22 - Top-up funding for FE Colleges - EHCP top-ups for students in further education colleges.

Line 23 - 26 - Top-up funding and other funding – non maintained and Independents - EHCP top-ups for Independent and non-maintained special schools, and placements in other alternative private provision for pupils with or without an EHCP.

Line 27 - Hospital Education Services – This includes Hospital Education unit at Royal Berkshire Hospital and Education for Pupils in Tier 4 CAMHS specialist independent mental health hospital provision which is commissioned by NHS England

Line 27 – Additional High Needs Targeted Funding (Inclusion Fund) – financial support to schools with a higher-than-average number of pupils with EHCPs.

Line 28 - SEN Support Services – This includes Sensory Consortium (joint arrangement with other Berkshire LAs), virtual school, and ASD Outreach commissioned to Christ the King School.

Line 29 - Support for Inclusion – Funding for hard-to-place pupils (through Inclusion panel & Therapeutic Thinking approach), and central staffing (2 posts) in Education department, one for statutory functions including monitoring exclusions and one for ASD advisory support. Includes contribution to the early years inclusion panel.

Line 30 - SEN Transport – Contributions to SEN School Travel

Line 31 - Therapies and other Health Related services – Contribution towards Speech and Language, Occupational and Physiotherapy. Jointly funded with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Line 32 – Central Services – Contributions to SEN Commissioning Team and Central establishment charges

Line 33 to 35 – Children Missing Education and Medical Education - Children Missing Education (CME) Funds team and payments to schools for taking on hard to place pupil scenarios and funds children missing education who are not in a PRU.

Line 36 – Teachers Pay and Pension grants to special schools/PRU

Line 37 – Repayment of deficit – All of the 2022/23 deficit related to the high needs block.

Appendix 3 - DSG Note to the LA Statement of Accounts

870 Reading

Details of the deployment of DSG receivable for 2023/24 are as follows:

Notes	Central expenditure	Individual schools budget	Total
A			162,501,749
B			69,378,372
C			93,123,377
D			0
E			0
F	28,312,421	64,810,956	93,123,377
G	0	-481,837	-481,837
H	28,312,421	64,329,119	92,641,540
I	33,835,435		33,835,435
J		64,747,097	64,747,097
K	0	0	0
L	-5,523,014	-417,978	-5,940,992
M			0
N			0
O			-3,463,298
P			-5,940,992
Q			-9,404,290
R			-9,404,290

Notes

- A Final DSG figure before any amount has been recouped from the authority as published March 2024. Does not include the adjustment to the 2022/23 DSG for early years made during 2023/24 based on January 2023 numbers or top-up funding (see G below).
- B Figure recouped from the authority in 2023/24 by the DfE for the conversion of maintained schools into academies and for high needs payments made by ESFA
- C Total DSG figure after academy and high needs recouped for 2023/24, as published March 2024. (Does not deduct centrally funded licences.)

- D Figure brought forward from 2022/23. There can only be an entry here if this is a surplus or zero; a deficit must have been placed in the DSG unusable reserve created by MHCLG's amending regulations.
- E Any amount which the authority decided after consultation with the Schools' Forum to carry forward to 2023/24 rather than distribute in 2024/25 – this may be the difference between estimated and final DSG for 2023/24, or a figure brought forward from 2023/24 which the authority is carrying forward again.
- F Budgeted distribution of DSG, adjusted for carry-forward, as agreed with the Schools' Forum. Note that the ISB column should include only money distributed to schools (including high needs place funding) and to other early years providers; centrally held schools block items such as the growth fund belong in the central expenditure column.
- G Changes to the initial distribution, for example adjustments for exclusions or the final early years block adjustment for 2022/23 made during 2023/24 on the basis of January 2023 numbers or top-up funding.
- H Budgeted distribution of DSG as at the end of the financial year
- I Actual amount of central expenditure items in 2023/24 – amounts not actually spent, e.g. money that is moved into earmarked reserves.
- J Amount of ISB actually distributed to schools (ISB is regarded for DSG purposes as spent by the authority once it is deployed to schools' budget shares). Note that budget shares include early years funding, sixth form funding and high needs place funding; they do not include high needs top-up funding, which is treated as central expenditure
- K Any contribution from the local authority in 2022/23 that will have the effect of substituting for DSG in funding the school's budget. Does not include any change in balances held by schools as they are not to be recorded in this note.
- L In-year position at end of 2023/24, ie:
- For central expenditure, difference between final budgeted distribution of DSG and actual expenditure, plus any local authority contribution.
 - For ISB, difference between final budgeted distribution and amount actually deployed to schools, plus any local authority contribution.
- M Plus/minus any carry-forward to 2024/25 already agreed.
- N Total is carry-forward on central expenditure plus carry-forward on ISB plus/minus any carry-forward to 2024/25 already agreed. To be entered in this line, this can only be a surplus or zero; if it results in a deficit, enter zero. Any in-year deficit in 2023/24 must be recorded as part of the DSG unusable reserve.
- O DSG unusable reserve at end of 2022/23 (if any) – any amount placed in the unusable reserve at the end of 2021/22 in accordance with the MHCLG amending regulations.
- P Any addition to DSG unusable reserve in 2023/24 as a result of an in-year deficit in 2023/24.
- Q Total of DSG unusable reserve at end of 202/24
- R Net DSG position at the end of 2023/24; this is a memorandum item designed to show the overall position on DSG. It is calculated by taking the figure (if any) and deducting the figure (if any) and will therefore show any net deficit that the local authority would have if the unusable reserve were not held separately.



Reading Schools' Forum

June 20, 2024

Agenda Item 5

Maintained School Balances
2023/24 and Budgets 2024/25

For decision

For discussion

For information

SUMMARY

This is to

AUTHOR

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VERSION

Version number 1

DATE

June 20, 2024

REVIEW DATE

N/A

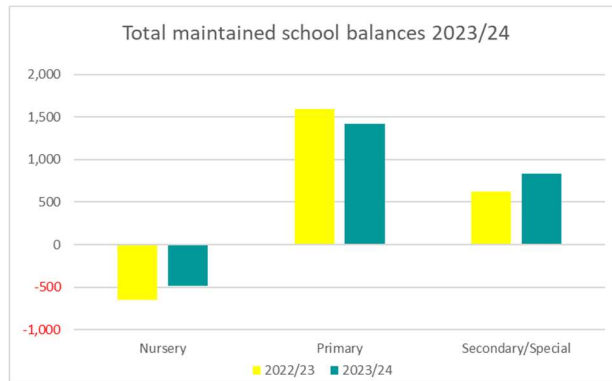
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Brighter Futures for Children
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading RG1 2LU

Company number 11293709

1. Summary

1.1 Overall school balances have marginally increased from £1.6m as at 31 March 2023 to £1.8m as at 31 March 2024, overall, a 12.5% improvement, as per the following chart:



1.2 The movements during the year by phase were:

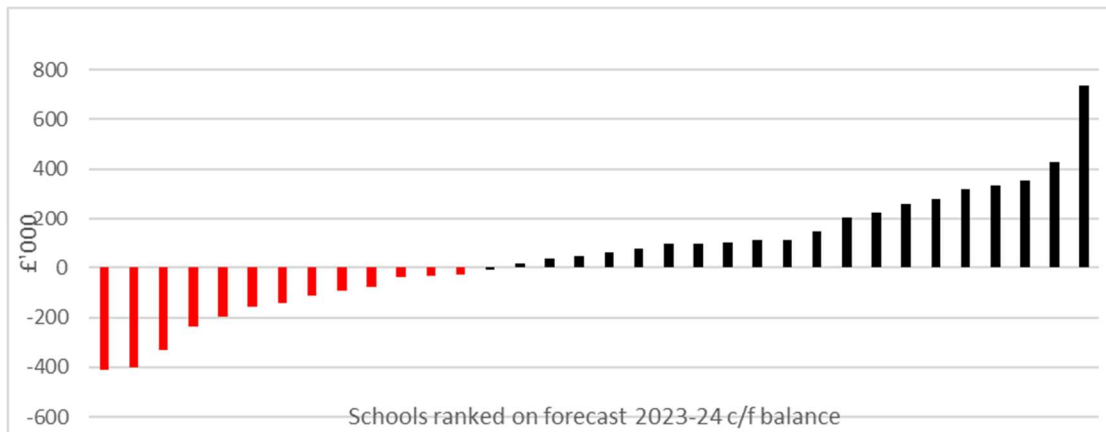
Phase	2023/24 movement £'000s	Total 2023/24 balance £'000s
Nursery	164	(488)
Primary	(173)	1,421
Secondary/Special	206	831
Total	197	1,764

Overall school balances have increased despite budgeting to be £0.9m worse. This included both higher spend (£5.5m) and higher funding (£7.2m):

- £4.7m additional staff costs with £1.9m on teachers and an additional £2.0m on Education Support Staff reflecting the higher-than-expected pay increases as well as increase for staff to support rising SEN. A further £1.0m was spent on Agency Staff (2022-23 £1.1m)
- £0.4m more was spent on premises costs with energy up £0.3m, whilst £0.3m less was spent on learning/IT resources
- Other supplies and services also increased by £0.9m with a £0.5m increase in bought-in professional curriculum services and non-curriculum services up £0.2m
- Schools received £6.4m higher DSG funding that included the increase in EY funding £1.1m, teacher pay grants £0.5m, additional funding for ARPs/Resource units £3.6m and Falling Rolls/Schools in Financial Difficulty funds
- SEN funding (EHCP) increased £0.8m but Covid grants reduced £0.2m to £0.4m. These grants end in July 2024.

It should be reflected that overall schools have worked hard to control the impact of increasing costs from rising prices/pay and additional costs relating to supporting pupils to continue to deliver a good education to Reading children.

1.3 The spread of balances is as follows (details in Appendix):



1.4 14 maintained schools ended the year 2023/24 with a deficit balance totalling £2.3m compared to 12 schools at the end of 2022/23 with a combined deficit balance of £2.0m as shown below:

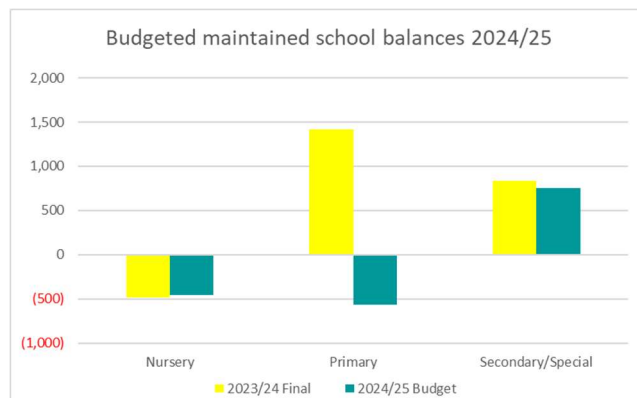
Phase	2022/23 balance £'000s	2023/24 balance £'000s
Nursery	(772)	(600)
Primary	(1,185)	(1,677)
Secondary/Special	0	0
Total	(1,957)	(2,277)

In terms of numbers of schools by phase this is:

School Phase	No. of surplus	No. of deficit
Maintained Nursery Schools	1	4
Primary Schools	17	10
Secondary/Special	2	0
Total	20	14

2. 2024/25 budgeted balances

Overall balances for 2024/25 are budgeted to decrease by £2.0m to a deficit balance of -£0.2m (2023/24 budgeted deficit balance -£0.9m):



This includes 15 schools in deficit totalling £3.4m (up from 2023/24 balance £2.8m).

- All schools budgeting a deficit balance are required to complete a Licensed Deficit Application to be submitted to the Director of Education.
- The deficit balances are reviewed and classified according to reason such as legacy, pupil numbers, impact of SEN
- The Director of Education will then contact each school to specify any next steps required as part of the approval of the application
- The schools are required to submit monthly budget monitoring reports from September 2024 and the BfC School Finance Support team continue to work with these schools to support them with these plans.
- Further training and support with regards to effective Financial Management using a wide range of tools and advice made available by the DfE is available through school finance support providers.

There are several factors included in the submitted budgets:

- Overall costs are up £4.5m compared to increased funding/income of £2.0m
- Additional staffing costs up by £5.2m (8.8%) that includes budgeted increases of 3% and increased staffing, this is offset by a reduction in budgeted agency costs of £0.6m and a reduction in bought-in professional services of £0.4m
- Budgeted school funding is increasing £4.9m or 7.9% with a 1.9% increase in the Schools Block funding as well as significant increases in EY funding and a new grant to cover the increase in the Teacher Pension Employer Contributions and a full year of Teacher Pay Additional Grant introduced in September 2023. There is also the roll out of the ARPs.
- Many other grants are budgeted to fall with a £0.9m reduction in SEN funding as pupils are moved into ARPs and fall of £0.4m in income generated from After School Clubs, Breakfast Clubs, chargeable nursery fees etc

3. Appendices

See Appendix 1 for Balances by School for 2023/24.

Appendix 1: School balances 2023/24

School name	Type of school	Main School Revenue/Community Total Balances		In-year movement		Balance as % of total income 2023/24
		2022/23	2023/24	23/24 vs 22/23	% movement	
Blagdon Nursery School and Children's Centre	Nursery	-189,780	-29,311	160,469	84.6%	-1.6%
Blaggrave Nursery School	Nursery	-102,454	-93,952	8,502	8.3%	-26.2%
Caversham Nursery School	Nursery	-254,980	-332,991	-78,012	-30.6%	-34.9%
New Bridge Nursery School	Nursery	-225,010	-143,188	81,822	36.4%	-20.3%
Norcot Early Years Centre	Nursery	120,630	111,772	-8,858	-7.3%	6.4%
Total Nursery Schools		-651,594	-487,670	163,924	25.2%	-8.8%
Alfred Sutton Primary School		186,082	334,932	148,850	80.0%	8.7%
All Saints Church of England Aided Infant School	Voluntary Controlled	20,926	35,112	14,186	67.8%	7.8%
Caversham Park Primary School		-8,677	-78,362	-69,685	803.1%	-8.3%
Caversham Primary School		14,212	-8,903	-23,115	-162.6%	-0.4%
Christ the King Catholic Primary School	Voluntary Aided	127,922	146,841	18,919	14.8%	5.5%
Coley Primary School		15,755	-38,512	-54,267	-344.4%	-2.6%
Emmer Green Primary School		-75,859	-115,047	-39,188	-51.7%	-5.0%
English Martyrs' Catholic Primary School	Voluntary Aided	105,670	61,359	-44,311	-41.9%	2.4%
E P Collier Primary School		169,531	205,845	36,314	21.4%	8.4%
Geoffrey Field Infant School		227,009	225,085	-1,925	-0.8%	10.8%
Geoffrey Field Junior School		318,667	355,990	37,322	11.7%	15.0%
Katesgrove Primary School		155,969	77,595	-78,374	-50.2%	2.0%
Manor Primary School		-15,073	45,387	60,460	-401.1%	2.1%
Micklands Primary School		-197,440	-399,448	-202,008	-102.3%	-19.3%
Moorlands Primary School		79,031	94,650	15,619	19.8%	4.1%
Oxford Road Community School		146,778	260,165	113,387	77.3%	14.8%
Park Lane Primary School		64,849	100,803	35,954	55.4%	4.4%
Redlands Primary School		-156,920	-237,123	-80,203	N/A	-17.4%
Southcote Primary School		68,002	14,710	-53,292	-78.4%	0.4%
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	Voluntary Aided	-455,159	-411,709	43,450	9.5%	-31.3%
St Martin's Catholic Primary School	Voluntary Aided	-195,114	-196,776	-1,662	-0.9%	-21.4%
St Michael's Primary School		301,088	320,043	18,955	6.3%	12.8%
Thameside Primary School		-80,514	-155,960	-75,445	93.7%	-5.5%
The Hill Primary School		290,250	281,425	-8,825	-3.0%	13.2%
The Ridgeway Primary School		150,236	108,797	-41,439	-27.6%	3.9%
Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School		55,730	-35,220	-90,949	-163.2%	-0.9%
Wilson Primary School		281,019	428,878	147,859	52.6%	14.9%
Total Primary Schools		1,593,971	1,420,557	-173,414	-10.9%	2.3%
Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School	Voluntary Aided	501,653	735,731	234,078	46.7%	9.6%
The Holy Brook School		123,614	95,650	-27,964	-22.6%	8.8%
Total Secondary/Special Schools		625,267	831,381	206,114	33.0%	9.5%
Total Balances		1,567,644	1,764,268	196,624	12.5%	2.3%



Reading Schools' Forum

June 20, 2024

Agenda Item 6

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
Budget 2024/25

For decision

For discussion

For information

SUMMARY

This report sets out the DSG budget for 2024/25 and outlines the areas of pressure to be monitored throughout the year.

AUTHOR

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VERSION

Version number 1

DATE

June 20, 2024

REVIEW DATE

None

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Company number 11293709

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 NOTE: The overall budget for 2024/25.
- 1.2 NOTE: The potential pressures within each funding block.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced specific grant and can only be used in support of the schools' budget and spent on school/pupil activity as defined by the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations (2023).
- 2.2 The DSG is split between four different funding blocks - schools, central school services, early years, and high needs. Each Council's allocation is largely based upon actual pupil numbers from the October pupil count proceeding the actual financial year. Although separate allocations are received for each block, transfers are allowed between blocks but subject to certain restrictions.
- 2.3 Most of the grant is allocated to schools – the Individual School's Budget (ISB) or delegated budget – this is mainly formula driven; the remainder is the Centrally Retained School's Budget – the non-delegated budget.
- 2.4 Overspends on the DSG are carried forward and are a first call on the new year's allocation of DSG. Underspends on the DSG are carried forward to support the future year's schools' budget.
- 2.5 The Authority must ensure that DSG is correctly spent and has to report the outturn position to inform the impact upon the following year's budget position. The budget monitoring of the Authority distinguishes between how services are funded, namely by DSG or by the Local Authority.
- 2.6 The LA receives its DSG allocation gross (including allocations relating to academies and post-16 provision), and then the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) recoups the actual budget for these settings to pay them direct, leaving a net or LA allocation.

3. DSG Allocation 2024/25

- 3.1. The DSG allocation estimated for 2024/25 is summarised in Table 1 below. The DSG allocation received by the LA will change during the year and the next update is due in July when the latest high needs and early years' allocations are published. The original budget was based on the LA's own estimate of these, and this needs to be monitored as it could impact on the overall position.
- 3.2. The allocations shown in the table are prior to any transfers between blocks. For the 2024/25 budget the Schools' Forum has agreed a transfer of £484k from the school's block to the high needs block.

Table 1: BFFC's original DSG allocations for 2024/25 (March 2024)

BLOCK	ORIGINAL ESTIMATED DSG ALLOCATION 2024/25		
	Gross DSG Allocations (£m)	Less centrally deducted NNDR and Academy Recoupment (£m)	Total LA DSG Allocations (£m)
Schools Block	126.102	-71.929	54.173
Central Schools Block	1.138	0	1.138
Early Years Block	21.317	0	21.317
High Needs Block	31.317	-4.524	26.793
Total	179.043	-76.453	103.421
23/24 EY adjustment			0
Total Available			103.421

- 3.3. The main changes that **may occur** and need to be monitored during the year are as follows:
- Reductions in the schools' block funding due to any academy conversions. This is because funding is paid direct to these schools by the ESFA, though this has minimal impact on the LA budget, as expenditure is reduced accordingly. Currently, there are no mainstream academy conversions in process.
 - High needs block funding will be adjusted in July due to the import/export adjustment if there is a change to the number of Reading pupils placed in settings outside Reading or a change in the number of pupils from other LAs attending settings in Reading. This is because the LA where the setting is located is responsible for the place funding, so this adjustment ensures any changes in pupil numbers transferring between LAs are properly funded. High needs funding is also adjusted for any changes in the number of high needs places in academies, which is deducted from our allocation.
 - Our early years original allocation budget has used Spring 2023 Census hours and due to Spring 2024 numbers being lower than previous years for 2 year olds but greater for 3 year olds, we are not estimating a decrease within early years. This will be confirmed in July 2024. For summer and autumn Early Years will be controlled by the DfE due to introduction of the expansion of the early years offer.

4. DSG Budget 2024/25 Update

- 4.1. Appendix 1 contains the original 2024/25 budget as agreed/notified at previous meetings of the Schools' Forum. This is split between the four funding blocks and broken down by the main reporting lines for the DSG.
- 4.2. Table 2 below summarises the current budget per block.

Table 2: Summary Budget 2024/25

	ORIGINAL BUDGET (£m)	VIREMENTS £m	CURRENT BUDGET (£m)
Schools Block	54.173	(0.484)	53.689
Central Schools Block	1.138	0	1.138
Early Years Block	21.317	0	21.317
High Needs Block	34.793	0.484	35.277
Sub Total – Net Expenditure	111.421		111.421
DSG Allocation - Income	(103.421)		(103.421)
Balance Over/(Under) Allocated	8.000	0	8.000

- 4.3. Budgets have been set with an estimated Early Years allocation based on January 2024 census that will be updated in July 2024. This table does not include any DSG deficit being carried forward from 2023-2024. Other changes to the DSG will need to be taken into account when confirmed in July. It is too early in the year to assess whether this position will be sustained. Risks and any emerging pressures are highlighted per block in the following paragraphs.
- 4.4. Forum should note that the £8m overspend allocated above the DSG allocation relates to the projected High Needs pressures expected in 2024/25. This is an indicative figure and should not be relied upon.

5. Current Risks/Emerging Issues

- 5.1. Schools Block (SB)
- There would only be a variance on maintained primary and secondary school delegated budget allocations due to business rate revaluations or where actual business rates bills vary from the initial school formula allocation (due to like for like funding). These are likely to be minimal.
 - The budget for this year does include funding for bulge classes for September 2024 if required, of which will be confirmed later in the year.
 - Falling Rolls was re-introduced in June 2022 and a revised policy was agreed at Schools Forum in March 2024. Any funding required in year will also be met from the Growth fund.
 - This surplus at the end of the financial year will be required for future year requirements as set out in the plan brought to Schools' Forum in January 2024.
 - De-delegations are contributions to central services and unlikely to have any variance.
- 5.2. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)
- Most of the central school services budgets are contributions and the majority will not therefore have a variance. There will be no variance on copyright licences, as this is a national contract agreed in advance. The small surplus brought forward from 2022/23 was used in 2023/24. No surplus was carried forward to 2024/25.

5.3. Early Years Block (EYB)

- Over 95% of Early Years Funding is relating to the free early year's entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 -year-olds. The budget for 2024/25 is based on the draft Spring 2024 census hours at the set hourly rates laid out in March 2024 Schools Forum paper. The DSG funding due to be received this year is based on an average of January 2023 and January 2024.
- It is impossible to make a reasonable forecast when both funding and expenditure is based on actual take up of places at a date in the future. If the budget was to overspend, this would then have an impact on the funding rate to providers in the following financial year.
- There is £310k contingency carried forward from 2023/24. Note that the contingency can only be used to fund providers through the Early Years' formula as already set and cannot be used to increase the hourly rates or to change the formula after these have been set for the year.
- Other budgets that pay for central spend are mainly contributions as agreed at the budget setting and will not have a variance.

5.4. High Needs Block (HNB)

- Annual expenditure in the HNB is increasing the deficit due to the ever-expanding EHCP population and the increasing need of pupils. The High Needs budget has increased, and more budget has been added to the placement/top-up expenditure, but this will be tested with the demand and inflation issues nationally. Top-up rates for Reading schools were increased by 3.4% in April 2024 and forms part of the increase to this budget. It is unlikely that the budget will be contained within its annual DSG allocation, and the overall deficit is increasing.
- As top-up/placement fees represent 89% of the high needs budget this will be closely monitored throughout the year, including comparing actual number and average cost of placements by each type to the original budget set.
- The Inclusion Fund provides additional funding to mainstream schools with a high percentage of pupils with EHCPs compared to our statistical neighbour average. £484,000 has been transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs block to fund this. This will be reviewed in-year due to the investment into the creation of additional resources provisions within Reading schools.
- Changes to this block in year are likely and are dependent on the outcomes of the DBV programme. The verbal update from SEN will provide additional details on the current position with the high needs deficit recovery plan.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary DSG Budget 2024/25

Appendix 1 – Summary DSG Budget 2024/25

Line Ref.	Description	Original Budget £m	Change	Current Budget £m
	Schools Block			
1	Individual Schools Budget - Maintained Schools	52.428		52.428
2	Growth Fund	0.572		0.572
3	Behaviour Support Services (de-delegation)	0.286		0.286
4	Staff costs supply cover (trade unions) (de-delegation)	0.084		0.084
5	School Improvement (de-delegation)	0.235		0.235
6	Statutory/regulatory Duties (ESG) (de-delegation)	0.084		0.084
7	0.5% movement to the High Needs Block	0.484		0.484
	Sub Total Schools Block Net Expenditure	54.173		54.173
	Central Schools Services Block			
8	Contribution to combined budgets	0.202		0.202
9	School admissions	0.272		0.272
10	Servicing of schools forum	0.020		0.020
11	Prudential borrowing costs	0.021		0.021
12	Other Items (copyright licences)	0.135		0.135
13	Statutory/regulatory Duties (ESG)	0.488		0.488
	Sub Total Central School Services Block Net Expenditure	1.138	0	1.138
	Early Years Block			
14	Early Years Funding entitlement (3 & 4 Year Olds)	11.952		11.952
15	Early Years Funding entitlement (2 Year Olds)	4.398		4.398
16	Early Years Funding entitlement (pre 2 Year Olds)	2.043		2.043
17	Maintained Nursery Grant	0.884		0.884
18	Disability Access Fund	0.095		0.095
19	Early Years Pupil Premium & Deprivation	0.618		0.618
20	Central expenditure on early years entitlement	0.947		0.947
	Sub Total Early Years Block Net Expenditure	20.938	0	20.938
	High Needs Block			
21	Additional Resourced Provisions	4.834		4.834
22	SEN placements - Maintained Schools (first £10k/£6k place funding)	0.440		0.440
23	Top up funding - Special Schools inc PRU	12.278		12.278
24	Top up funding - Resource Units	0.305		0.305
25	Top up funding - Mainstream	4.350		4.350
26	Top up funding - FE Colleges	1.355		1.355
27	Top up funding - Alternative Provision	1.571		1.571
28	Top up and other funding - non maintained & independent schools	6.043		6.043
29	SEN support services	0.590		0.590
30	Hospital education services	0.199		0.199
31	Support for Inclusion	1.527		1.527
32	Therapies and other health related services	0.520		0.520
33	Medical Tutoring (Children Missing Education)	0.050		0.050
34	Hard to Place Funding	0.050		0.050
35	Children Missing Education	0.169		0.169
36	Teachers pay & pension grants to special schools/PRU	0.296		0.296
37	Central Services	0.085		0.085
	Sub Total High Needs Block Net Expenditure	34.662		34.662
	Total All Blocks Net Expenditure	110.910	0	110.910
38	Total DSG Allocation Available	102.975	0	102.975

Balance - Deficit / (surplus) In Year

(7.935)

0

(7.935)





Reading Schools' Forum

June 20, 2024

Agenda Item 8

Scheme for Financing Schools
2024/25

For decision

For discussion

For information

SUMMARY

This report sets out the statutory changes required to the Scheme for Financing Schools, which requires approval by the Schools' Forum.

AUTHOR

Grahame Craig, DSG Business Partner

VERSION

Version number 1

DATE

June 20, 2024

REVIEW DATE

June 2024

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Brighter Futures for Children
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading RG1 2LU

Company number 11293709

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 AGREE: The revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools as set out in Appendix 1
Note: Voting applies to all Schools Members only.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Scheme for Financing Schools is a statutory document and all local authorities are required to publish their Scheme. It sets out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain.
- 2.2 The Department for Education (DfE) set out the provisions which the Scheme must, should or may include. In making any changes to their Schemes, other than directed revisions, local authorities must consult all maintained schools in their area and receive the approval of the members of Schools' Forum representing maintained schools.
- 2.3 The last update to Reading Borough Council's Scheme was in June 2023 and can be found on the RBC website¹.
- 2.4 The statutory guidance for the 2024/25 financial year was updated by the DfE on 28 March 2024.

3. Proposed Changes

- 3.1. There is only one change relating to borrowing by schools in paragraphs 3.7 & 3.8 regarding the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standard 16 (IFRS16) and the Secretary of State providing blanket consent to certain categories of finance lease. of retention of proceeds from sale of land assets requires consent of the Secretary of State. IFRS16 also ends the distinction between operating and finance leases at maintained schools, and as from 1 April 2024 all leases will be classified as a finance lease.
- 3.2. As we are only making the changes to reflect the current DfE policy guidance, we will not go out to consultation with all schools, though Schools' Forum are still required to approve these changes.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Changes to The Scheme for Financing Schools

Appendix 2 – Scheme for Financing Schools 2024/25 (with changes)

¹ <https://www.reading.gov.uk/schemes-for-financing-schools>

² [Schemes for financing local authority maintained schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schemes-for-financing-local-authority-maintained-schools)

Appendix 1 – Changes to The Scheme for Financing Schools 2024/25

- Paragraph 3.7: Change made to the guidance – Updated the section relating to IFRS16 and confirm its introduction from 1 April 2024.
- Paragraph 3.8 Change made to the guidance – Removed wording relating to finance versus operating leases. Include the explanation confirming that the DfE consider all leases to be finance leases and detail the exceptions allowed by the DfE.



SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Version 2024.01

Approved by Schools' Forum on 20/06/2024

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FOREWORD

The Scheme sets out the principles underlying the funding of schools, and the basis for the financial relationship between maintained schools in Reading and the Authority.

The June 2023 version incorporates statutory changes to reflect current policy positions and changes in legislation, as notified in the 31 March 2023 version of the guidance from the DfE¹.

The Authority will keep the scheme under review and stakeholders are invited to comment on the scheme at any time to the Chief Finance Officer.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schemes-for-financing-schools/schemes-for-financing-local-authority-maintained-schools>

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Funding Framework

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

Under this legislation, local authorities determine for themselves the size of their schools budget and their non-schools education budget – although at a minimum a Authority must appropriate its entire Dedicated Schools Grant to their schools budget. The categories of expenditure which fall within the two budgets are prescribed under regulations made by the Secretary of State, but included within the two, taken together, is all expenditure, direct and indirect, on an authority's maintained schools except for capital and certain miscellaneous items. Local authorities may centrally retain funding in their schools budget for purposes defined in regulations made by the Secretary of State under s.45A of the Act. The amounts to be retained centrally are decided by the authority concerned, subject to any limits or conditions prescribed by the Secretary of State (including gaining the approval of Schools' Forum or the Secretary of State in certain instances). The balance of the schools budget left after deduction of centrally retained funds 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).

Local authorities must distribute their 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 s.51 of the Act. The financial controls within which delegation works are set out in a scheme made by the authority in accordance with s.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 provisions of the scheme, governing bodies of schools may spend budget shares as they think fit for any purposes of their school. They may also spend budget shares on any additional purposes prescribed by the Secretary of State in regulations made under s.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).

An authority may suspend a school's right to a delegated budget if the provisions of the school financing 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 (schedule 17 of 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.

Regulations also require an Authority to publish their scheme and any revisions to it on a website accessible to the general public, by the date that any revisions come into force, together with a statement that the revised scheme comes into force on that date.

1.2 The role of the scheme

The Scheme is prepared in line with the latest statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education which relates to s.48 of the School Standards and Framework Act, and Schedule 14 to the Act. It sets out the principles underlying the funding of schools, and the basis for the financial relationship between Reading Borough Council and the maintained schools which it funds. The requirements of the scheme relating to financial management and associated issues as detailed throughout this document are binding on both the Authority and on schools.

1.3 Application of the scheme to the Authority and maintained schools

The institutional coverage of the scheme will be for all community, nursery, voluntary, foundation, community special or foundation special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) maintained by Reading Borough Council. A current list of the schools to which the scheme applies is provided at annex A (Schools covered by the scheme) of this document. Unless specifically stated otherwise the provisions of this Scheme apply to any nursery school maintained by the Authority.

As indicated in s.48 of the Act, new maintained schools opening will also be covered by the scheme.

Maintained schools that convert to academy status will cease to be covered by the Scheme. Similarly, new Free Schools will not be covered by the Scheme.

1.4 Publication of the scheme

A copy of the scheme and any approved revisions will be supplied to the head teacher and to the governing body of each school covered by the scheme and placed on the Authority's website. This requirement is subject to regulations published by the Secretary of State for Education.

1.5 Revision of the scheme

The scheme and any subsequent amendments are subject to the approval of members of Schools' Forum representing maintained schools. Any subsequent revisions to the scheme will be subject to consultation with the governing body and head teacher of every school maintained by the Authority and then submission to Schools' Forum for approval. Where 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.

If the Secretary of State makes directed revisions to schemes *after* consultation, such revisions become part of the scheme from the date of the direction.

1.6 Delegation of powers to the head teacher

As part of the scheme, the governing body of each school is required to consider and review (at a frequency to be determined by the governing body and agreed with the Director of Education) the extent to which it wishes to delegate its financial powers to the head teacher, and to record its decision (and any revisions) in the minutes of the governing body. Additionally, the Governing Body or a committee of the governing body must approve the first formal annual budget plan of each financial year.

1.7 Maintenance of Schools

Reading Borough Council 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 in which the Authority maintains schools is through the funding system put in place under sections 45 to 53 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

SECTION 2: FINANCIAL CONTROLS

2.1 Application of financial controls to schools

Schools are required to abide by the Authority's requirements on financial controls and monitoring in the management of their delegated budgets as outlined within this scheme and detailed in the financial regulations, and those guidelines contained in more detailed publications referred to in the scheme but outside and compatible with it.

2.2 Provision of financial information and reports

Schools are required to provide the Authority with details of actual expenditure and income reconciled to the bank account (I&E Return) on a monthly basis. Schools will also be required to submit outturn statements twice a year – usually in September (monitoring position at month 5) and in January (monitoring position at month 9). The Authority may determine different methods for individual schools and will consult with schools about such requirements, for example schools in financial difficulty may be asked to submit monthly monitoring reports. The submission of such information should so far as possible take account of the Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) framework. This is in addition to the financial information required as part of schools annual budget plans and year-end predicted outturn processes.

2.3 Payment of salaries; payment of bills

All payments from delegated budgets are to be made in accordance with:

- any specific Service Level Agreement drawn up between the school and Reading Borough Council and,
- the guidelines as detailed as part of any service purchased by the school as part of a Buy-Back service from the Authority, which includes the retention of delegated funding as part of the arrangements for the payroll service.

2.4 Control of assets

Each school is required to maintain an inventory of its moveable assets, in a form to be agreed by the Authority and establish authorisation procedures for disposal of assets. As a minimum requirement all schools should maintain an inventory which records all plant, machinery and equipment with an estimated life of more than five years and an approximate replacement value of, or historic cost of more than, £1,000. Schools should also keep some form of register of assets worth less than £1,000 but are free to determine their own arrangements (with a suggested de minimis of £250). This would be to register anything that is portable and attractive such as a camera.

2.5 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. Guidance will be published annually on the practical arrangements (e.g. accruals accounting and other end of year financial procedures).

2.6 Writing off of debts

No debt shall be discharged other than by payment in full or being written-off. The writing-off of non-recoverable debts is set out in the Financial Regulations and requires the Authority's approval for sums over £5,000, as well as full governing body approval.

2.7 Basis of accounting

End of year reports and accounts completed by schools for submission to the Authority are to be prepared on the same accounting basis as the Authority's financial accounts, that is on an accruals accounting basis, as detailed in the Authority's financial regulations and in accordance with a timetable agreed with the Authority. Support will be available from the Authority for schools requiring assistance in this process.

2.8 Submission of budget plans

Governing bodies must prepare, formally adopt and submit to the Authority a budget plan which reconciles with their total budget allocation, detailing its budgeted income and expenditure for the current financial year, in a format taking account of the Consistent Financial Reporting framework. The plan should be prepared in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Authority to schools as part of the Authority's annual budget preparation process and should take full account of estimated deficits / surpluses at the previous 31 March. Governing bodies should normally submit their formal budget plan to the Authority by no later than 1 May.

The Authority will supply schools in a timely manner with all income and expenditure data it holds which is necessary to efficient planning by schools, for example indicative budget shares as soon as they are available, usually by the end of January.

The Authority would normally expect the governing body to review the initial submitted and approved budget plan in September and January of the current financial year and submit current year outturn forecasts to the Authority. Completed budget plans and any current year forecasts need to demonstrate both the assumptions which underpin the financial data reported and what consideration the

school has made of other Authority initiatives which have a direct impact on the school's resources.

2.9 Submission of financial forecasts

Governing bodies must also submit to the Chief Finance Officer a financial forecast covering each year of a three to five year period. The purposes of such forecasts are to ensure schools are planning ahead strategically and to indicate where schools may have financial difficulties. Multi-year forecasts should be submitted no later than the 30 June.

2.10 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.

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

As a minimum, schools should review their current expenditure, compare it to other schools (such as through use of the DfE's benchmarking tool <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>), and think about how to make improvements.

2.11 Virement

Governing bodies are authorised to freely transfer funds between budgets whilst ensuring that the overall budget as approved and submitted to the Authority remains within the cash limit agreed with the Authority. It is for the governing body to determine the extent to which it wishes to delegate power to vire between budget heads and to record its decision in the minutes of the governing body. Proposed virements exceeding the delegated power must be formally adopted by the governing body and duly minuted.

2.12 Audit: General

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011, the Chief Finance Officer has a statutory responsibility to ensure that a continuous internal audit and examination of accounting, stores and financial records and internal control systems of the Authority and its officers are carried out.

The Chief Finance Officer or a nominated and authorised representative, including the Authority's external auditor, shall have the authority to:

- enter at all times on any premises or land used by the Authority;
- make such checks and seek such explanations as is considered necessary to be satisfied any matters under examination are correct;

- require any employee of the Authority and/or governing body to produce upon request cash, stores or other Authority (including all school) property under his/her control (including reasonable access to IT systems).

Wherever possible auditors will agree an appointment in advance with the school and ensure that they carry out their duties with the minimum disruption to the school.

This internal audit shall be carried out in accordance with the audit regime adopted by the Authority and as detailed in the Authority's *Financial Regulations*. Schools must co-operate with the Chief Finance Officer or his / her representative in all aspects related to the internal and external audit process including responding promptly and where appropriate confidentially to requests for information necessary to carry out the audit.

Head teachers and/or governing bodies shall notify the Director of Education, who shall in-turn inform the Chief Finance Officer of any irregularities or suspected irregularities concerning cash, stores or other property of the Authority or school, or the exercise of any of the Authority's or school's functions.

2.13 Separate external audits

Governing bodies are authorised to spend funds from their budget share to obtain external audit certification of its accounts, separate from any Authority internal or external audit process. Any external audit commissioned by the school must take into account the status of the school as being a spender of the Authority's funds. Copies of external audit reports commissioned by the school should be made available to the Authority.

2.14 Voluntary Funds Charity Commission Registration and Audit of voluntary and private funds

Registration

Charity Commission registration requirements should be followed, these differ between voluntary, foundation and community schools.

Schools must consider their own specific needs should the annual gross income of these funds exceed £5,000. This includes donations, fund raising receipts as well as interest payments. Where the fund (or part of the fund) is used as a holding account, where money is being collected for a specific purpose, e.g. school trips, photographs, uniforms, this can be netted off and be exempt from the £5,000 (other than any surplus). If a school is in any doubt about whether or not it needs to register, it should seek advice from the Charity Commission.

Scrutiny of accounts

The governing body must advise the Chief Finance Officer of all voluntary and private funds held by the school including any trading organisations controlled by the school. In addition to details of any such funds, schools are required to provide annual audit

certificates of all such funds. The governing body must choose either independent examination by a suitably qualified person or arrange for an independent audit by a registered auditor that provides the level of assurance deemed suitable and this should be documented in the school's own finance procedures manual.

Any other requirements concerning the audit of such funds are a matter for those making the funds available and, where registered as a charity, any Charity Commission requirements.

2.15 Register of business interests

Governors and staff have a responsibility to avoid any conflict between their business and personal interests and the interests of the school. This is essential for effective and accountable financial management of the school. Interest should be declared that could result in a conflict of interest. Examples of potential conflicts of interest include:

-

1. Financial – interests in a contract or proposed contract by direct or family connection.
2. Appointment – interests in the provision for sponsor governors or interests in someone's appointment, reappointment or suspension from office as a governor or clerk to the governing body.
3. Pay and performance – interests in the pay or appraisal of someone working at the school in cases where the governor or staff member is also paid to work at the school.

The governing body of each school is required to establish a register which lists for each member of the governing body and management team (including the head teacher and School Business Manager/Bursar), any business interests they or any member of their immediate family have; details of any other educational establishments that they govern; and any relationship between school staff and members of the governing body. The register must be kept up to date with notification of changes and through annual review of entries, and to make the register available for inspection by governors, staff and parents, and the authority and to publish the register on a publicly accessible website. Schools are required to report their Related Party Transactions as part of the annual submission of the Schools Financial Value Standard see 22.2.

2.16 Purchasing, tendering and contracting requirements

Schools must abide by the Authority's financial regulations and standing orders in purchasing, tendering and contracting matters (including leases). Schools are required to assess in advance, where relevant, the health and safety competence of contractors, taking account of the Authority's policies and procedures.

In accordance with DfE requirements, schools are **exempt** from any provisions in the Authority's *Financial Regulations* which would require them to:

- a. do anything incompatible with the provisions of the Scheme, or any statutory

- provision, or any EU Procurement Directive;
- b. seek an Authority officer countersignature for any contracts for goods or services for a value below £60,000 in any one year;
 - c. select suppliers only from an approved list;
 - d. permit schools to seek fewer than three quotes or tenders 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 EU procurement 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.

Schools may seek advice on a range of compliant deals via Buying for schools (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools>).

2.17 Application of contracts to schools

Schools are free to elect to opt out of contracts arranged by the Authority.

Whilst 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 maintainer of the school and the owner of the funds in the budget share. For this reason, the Authority will require all contracts exceeding £100,000 entered into by the school to be counter-signed by the Authority. Other contracts may be made solely on behalf of the governing body, when the governing body has clear statutory obligations - for example, contracts made by aided or foundation schools for the employment of staff. VA and Foundation school governing bodies are legally separate entities and do not require counter-signature from the Authority. However, as the Authority is providing the funds, any school which places a contract that will be funded by more than £60,000 from delegated funds, should advise the Authority. In practice this notification will normally happen in the ordinary course of events.

In line with Section 2.16 and the requirement on schools to have regard to good tendering procedures, schools should:

- Seek tenders for all contracts over £60,000
- Obtain 3 quotes or tenders for contracts above £10,000
- Ensure that the Chair of Governors of all schools (or a nominee) opens tenders above £100,000
- Ensure that an Authority Member is involved in the opening of tenders above £250,000 (community schools only)

2.18 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. All such allocations may 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 does not permit virement), this should not be carried to the point of assimilating the allocations into the school's budget share.

Such earmarked funding from centrally retained funds is only to be spent on the purposes for which it is given, or on other budget heads for which earmarked funding is given and is not transferred into the budget share. Schools are not permitted to authorise expenditure in excess of the amount allocated without the prior agreement and approval of the Director of Education. Furthermore, unless previously agreed with the Director of Education, any earmarked funds not spent in the current financial year are to be returned to the Authority. The Authority will not make any deduction, in respect of interest costs to the Authority, from payments to schools of devolved specific special grant. Schools shall comply with the audit requirements as outlined within financial regulations. Details of earmarked funds as well as the purposes of such funds will be included with the budget statements for each school year.

2.19 Spending for the purposes of the school

Schools must be managed in accordance with their budget allocation for each financial year. They may use their budget allocation to meet, subject to the requirements as outlined in the scheme, all expenditure for the purposes of the school.

They may not however use this resource to meet the cost of:

- any items detailed as exceptions within the scheme, and outlined in this document,
- any items relating to unofficial school funds and;
- any non-LA (or non-curriculum related) activities. By virtue of section 50(3A), amounts spent by governing bodies on community facilities under section 27 of the Education Act 2002 will be treated as if spent for the purposes of the school.

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

Income received and/or reflected in the schools general accounts must come from the following sources only:

- Advances (general and special) from the Authority
- VAT, tax and other related reimbursements
- Any income generated as a result of an authorised school activity
- Approved contributions towards school expenditure from a third-party
- Any other sources as notified and agreed with the Director of Education and the Chief Finance Officer.

2.20 Capital spending from budget shares

Governing bodies may 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 SSAF Act 1998.

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 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 Authority's approved capital programme. If the expected capital expenditure from the budget share in any one year will exceed £25,000, the governing body must notify the Authority and take into account any advice from the Director Education and the Chief Finance Officer as to the merits of the proposed expenditure. If the Authority owns the premises or the school has voluntary controlled status, then the governing body should seek the consent of the Authority to the proposed works, but consent will only normally be withheld on health and safety grounds.

The reasons for these provisions are to help meet responsibilities 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 do not affect expenditure from any capital allocation made available by the authority outside the delegated budget share.

2.21 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 Director of Education, 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.

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. These may include:

- 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

- such as the provision of monthly accounts to the Authority;
- insisting on regular financial monitoring meetings at the school attended by Authority officers;
- requiring a governing body to buy into the Authority’s financial management systems; and
- imposing restrictions or limitations on the manner in which a school manages extended school activity funded from within its delegated budget share – for example by requiring a school to submit income projections and/or financial monitoring reports on such activities.

The notice will clearly state what these requirements are and the way in which and the time by which such requirements must be complied with in order for the notice to be withdrawn. It will also state the actions that the Authority may take where the governing body does not comply with the notice.

2.22 Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

All maintained schools (including nursery schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) that have a delegated budget) must demonstrate compliance with the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) and complete the assessment form on an annual basis. It is for the school to determine at what time in the year they wish to complete the form, but this must be before the end of the financial year.

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 action 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 31 March. Authorities should submit their assurance statement to DfE within 6 weeks, by no later than 31 May 2023 for the financial year 2022-23.

2.23 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 these controls. This information must also be included in induction for new school staff and governors.

SECTION 3: INSTALMENTS OF THE BUDGET SHARE; BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

For the purposes of this section, Budget Share includes any place-led funding for special schools or pupil referral units.

3.1 Frequency of instalments

The Authority will ensure that schools receive their budget share allocation in monthly instalments sufficient to meet their reasonable cash-flow needs. Top-up payments for pupils with high needs will be made on a monthly basis unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with the provider. The Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Director of Education will agree with individual schools an appropriate schedule of payment. Payments to individual school bank accounts will usually be by BACS.

3.2 Proportion of budget share payable at each instalment

Monthly budget share payments to schools will be made in accordance with the schedule of payment agreed with individual schools and the Chief Finance Officer. Where no prior agreement exists with a school and the Chief Finance Officer, then the budget share payable will be equal to one twelfth of the schools approved budget share. Payment will be made direct into the school's main bank account.

Schools wishing to revise their schedule of payment, changing either the frequency of each instalment or the proportion of budget share payable at each instalment are required to submit their request at least two weeks in advance in writing to the Chief Finance Officer.

Schools who use a payroll service that is external to that provided by the Authority will receive their budget share in instalments that reasonably take account of payroll costs. Those schools whose payroll is administered by the Authority will receive the instalments net of estimated payroll costs for the period to which the payment relates.

3.3 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. The calculation basis as outlined in annex B (Interest charges on advances) may be at a rate up to 2% higher than the rate applicable to funds invested with the Authority on any amount advanced, although provided the Authority has agreed the business plan with the school that sets out the repayment regime, interest will usually be waived.

3.3.1 Interest on late budget share payments

The Authority will add interest to late payments of budget share instalments made after payroll run day each month, where such late payment is the result of Authority error. The interest rate to be used will be that used for clawback calculations as detailed above.

3.4 Budget shares for closing schools

Subject the agreement of the Director of Education and the Chief Finance Officer, the budget shares of schools for which approval for discontinuation has been secured, may be made available until closure of that school on a monthly basis net of estimated pay costs, even where some different basis was previously used.

3.5 Bank and building society accounts

All maintained schools must establish a main bank account to which the budget share will be paid. They must notify the Chief Finance Officer of the account and any proposals to change it. Schools shall be allowed to retain all interest payable on the account unless they choose to have an account within an authority contract which makes other provision.

When a school so changes its bank account, the previous account used to receive budget shares should be closed within 3 months, and any balance transferred to the new account. Any balance the Authority is holding in respect of the school's budget share (or if necessary, an estimate, to be adjusted once the correct amount is determined), will also be transferred to the new account (or from it in the case of a deficit, subject to funds being available).

Schools shall also notify the Chief Finance Officer of other bank accounts they hold, although this is not necessary if the account is held by a separate legally constituted related legal body (e.g. a properly constituted charitable trust).

The operation of school bank accounts in this way will result in school balances being held in the nominated account at the year end, or one otherwise agreed with the Chief Finance Officer (subject to adjustments associated with estimated payroll costs, as mentioned in 3.2.).

3.6 Restrictions on accounts

Full details, including account details and authorised signatories (minimum of two) for all banking transactions, of all bank and/or building societies maintained by the school should be supplied in writing to the Chief Finance Officer. Schools are normally

required to advise the Authority at least three months in advance of its intention to change its banking arrangement. Any school closing an account used to receive its budget share and opening another must agree the new bank or building society with the Chief Finance Officer, which must be consistent with the authority's Treasury Management policy.

Under section 49(5) of the Act, all monies paid by the Authority and held in such accounts shall remain to be the property of the Authority until spent.

Although accounts can be in the name of the school rather than the authority, wherever the school holds its bank account, the account mandate should provide that the Authority is the owner of the funds in the account, that it is entitled to receive statements, and that it can take control of the account if the school's right to a delegated budget is suspended by the Authority.

Where on-line banking is used, schools must ensure that sufficient controls are in place for authorisation of transactions.

3.7 Borrowing by schools

With the exception of loan schemes run by the Authority and outlined in the scheme, governing bodies may only borrow money (which includes the use of finance leases) with the written permission of the Secretary of State (who will only grant permission for borrowing in exceptional circumstances). Details of all such requests and subsequent approvals or otherwise should be supplied in writing to the Authority's Chief Finance Officer.

However, schools may be permitted to use any scheme that the Secretary of State has said is available to schools without specific approval.

Schools must not use interest bearing credit cards, as this is considered a form of borrowing. Procurement cards should be used for facilitating electronic purchases, and these must be set up to prevent cash withdrawals. Balances must be fully cleared on a monthly basis.

The restrictions do not apply to Trustees and Foundations, whose borrowing, as private bodies, makes no impact on government accounts, though such borrowing must not be serviced directly from the delegated budget.

This provision does not apply to loan schemes run by the Authority. The postponed introduction of IFRS16 from 2020/21 has been introduced as from 1 April 2025.

3.8 Finance leases and hire purchase agreements

The Authority adopts the definition of leases in accordance with best accounting practice as described in the International Accounting Standard (IAS) 17.

IAS 17 classifies a lease as a finance lease if it 'transfers substantially all the risks and rewards incidental to ownership' to the lessee. A lease not classified as a finance lease is classified as an operating lease.

The introduction of IFRS16 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.

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 [IFRS16 Maintained Schools Finance Lease Class Consent 2024](#), (See Annex E). 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.

Schools must seek an opinion from the Authority's professional advisors (financial or legal) or the Authority before entering into any significant lease agreement, where a significant lease agreement is defined as a lease agreement where an annual gross lease payment to a bank or banks exceeds £20,000 or total gross lease payments over the life of the lease exceed £60,000 and/or at a level at the discretion of the Chief Finance Officer. This must be done irrespective of any advice given by the leasing company on the nature of the lease.

Schools must not enter into a significant lease through the equipment vendor without the express agreement of the Authority.

Schools must provide information on all leases as at the year-end or as requested by the Chief Finance Officer.

3.9 Other provisions

All relevant provisions contained in the Authority's financial regulations or other appropriate financial guidance issued by the Authority shall be applicable to schools where those provisions impact on a school's banking arrangements.

SECTION 4: THE TREATMENT OF SURPLUS AND DEFICIT BALANCES ARISING IN RELATION TO BUDGET SHARES

4.1 The right to carry forward surplus balances

Schools may carry forward from one financial year to the next any shortfall in expenditure relative to the school's budget share for the year plus or minus any balance brought forward from the previous year.

4.2 Reporting on and control of the use of surplus balances

Local authorities are no longer required to operate a balance control mechanism.

The Authority will, however, provide Schools' Forum with the level of year-end balances held by schools and the balance as a percentage of the delegated budget, plus the data for the previous three years. Schools' Forum will decide whether any schools will be required to provide additional information regarding the proposed use of those balances, if it has concerns over that school's financial management. Schools' Forum may commission the Authority to collect the information or collect the information directly. Schools' Forum must make information so collected available to the Authority on request.

4.3 Interest on surplus balances

Balances held by the Authority on behalf of schools will **not** attract interest.

4.4 Obligation to carry forward deficit balances

Where a schools expenditure in a financial year exceeds the schools budget share plus any surplus/deficit balances carried forward from a previous year, this will generate a deficit balance to be carried forward to the next financial year. Any such deficit balances will form a first charge and be deducted from the following year's budget share.

Unless the deficit is very small and can be managed within the school's normal cash flow, as soon as the school foresees such a situation is likely to arise it must seek advice of the Chief Finance Officer and Director of Education with proposals as to how the situation will be addressed.

Details of the amount of balances carried forward from one financial year to the next will be reflected in the relevant outturn statement published under s.251.

4.5 Planning for deficit budgets

Schools are required to operate on the basis of a balanced budget agreed with the Authority and are not permitted to plan for deficits in their initial budget plan. In the event that a school unavoidably generates a deficit balance then section 4.9 of the scheme shall apply.

4.6 Charging of interest on budget advances

The Authority is permitted to charge interest on any cash advanced to fund deficit balances. Interest on deficit balances will be calculated on a daily basis and may be charged at a rate up to base rate plus 2% though this will normally be waived provided the Authority has agreed the business plan to address a deficit position.

4.7 Writing off deficits

The Authority is not permitted to write off the deficit balance of any school.

4.8 Balances of closing and replacement schools

When a school closes, any balance, whether surplus or deficit shall revert to the Authority; it cannot be transferred as a balance to any other school, even where the school is a successor to the closing school. The closing school must make all reasonable endeavours to avoid a deficit balance on closure.

The Authority may make allocations to new schools which have the effect of giving them the benefit of additional sums which are equal to the balances of the relevant closing schools.

Where a school converts to academy status (whether as a standalone academy or as part of a multi academy trust) under section 4(1)(a) of the Academies Act 2010, the Authority must pay to the new academy school an amount equal to the surplus balance of the school at the date of conversion.

Where a school with a deficit balance converts to academy status (whether as a standalone academy or as part of a multi academy trust) under section 4(1)(a) of the Academies Act 2010, the Authority shall be compensated by central government for the amount of deficit inherited at the date of conversion. Central government will then recover the deficit from budget allocations made by them to the new academy.

Where a school converts to academy status as a sponsored academy due to being eligible for intervention, the Authority will pay to the academy school an amount equal to the surplus balance of the school at the date of conversion. Where a school with a deficit balance converts to academy status as a sponsored academy due to being eligible for intervention, the amount of the deficit is transferred to the Authority. The

Authority may charge some or all of the cost of deficit against the Dedicated Schools Grant.

4.9 Planned (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 Authority finance legislation.

The requirements are set out below:

- The maximum 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, would normally be 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 Director of Education 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 LA, 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 and updated at least annually.
- Schools must submit a deficit recovery plan to the Authority when their revenue deficit rises above 5% at 31 March of any year. Authorities may set a lower threshold than 5% for the submission of a deficit recovery plan if they wish. The 5% deficit threshold will apply when deficits are measured as at 31 March 2023.
- The school must provide to the Authority any additional information/school data requested in relation to the deficit recovery within a reasonable timescale. This may include information on staffing structures, class/timetable arrangements, curriculum plans etc.
- The school must submit monthly budget monitoring reports to the Authority.
- 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.
- A member of the Authority may attend the school's Governor Meetings where the budget is to be discussed.
- The Director of Education , jointly with the Chief Finance Officer, would be responsible for approving any deficit.
- Should a school not comply with the requirements of the licensed deficit, and/or the deficit recovery plan is not being adhered to, the Authority may issue a Notice of Concern (see paragraph 2.21) which may ultimately result in withdrawal of financial delegation.

The Authority will inform schools annually on the guidelines to setting a deficit budget and any additional requirements in operating with a licensed deficit.

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

4.10 Loan Schemes

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

There is currently no loan scheme available to Reading Borough Council Schools, and schools with a deficit are covered by a licenced deficit as set out in paragraph 4.9.

4.11 Credit union approach

Schools may group together to utilise externally held balances for a credit union approach to loans. If doing so and if the authority does not act as administrator of such an arrangement, audit certification will be required.

SECTION 5: INCOME

5.1 Income from lettings

Schools are allowed to retain income from lettings of school premises owned by the Authority which would otherwise accrue to the Authority, subject to alternative provisions arising from any joint use or PFI/PPP agreements. Income from lettings of school premises should not be paid into voluntary or private funds held by the school. Schools must ensure that lettings of school premises are not provided at an overall cost to the budget share but may 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. The use of such premises is subject to any directions issued by the Authority as to the appropriate use of school premises as permitted under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 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.

5.2 Income from fees and charges

Schools are allowed to retain income from fees and charges except where a service is provided by the Authority from centrally retained funds. Schools are required to give due regard to any policy statements on charging the Authority may produce.

5.3 Income from fund-raising activities

Schools are allowed to retain income from fund-raising activities.

5.4 Income from the sale of assets

Schools are allowed to retain the proceeds of sale of assets except in cases where the asset was purchased with non-delegated funds (in which case it will be for the Authority to decide whether the school should retain any of 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 attached to that consent relating to use of proceeds.](#)

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

5.5 Administrative procedures for the collection of income

The procedures for the collection of all income due to the Authority are subject to the continual review of and issuing of appropriate guidance from the Chief Finance Officer.

5.6 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.

Sale of assets would become part of the capital balance of the school and, therefore, would be available for capital expenditure only.

SECTION 6: THE CHARGING OF SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES

6.1 General provision

The Authority is authorised to charge the budget share of a school without the consent of the governing body **only** in circumstances expressly permitted by the scheme (6.2) and requires authorities to consult with schools on any intended changes, and notify schools when it has been done. The Authority is not permitted to levy a charge where the statutory responsibility rests elsewhere and therefore the Authority cannot incur a liability. For the avoidance of doubt the Authority may de-delegate funding for permitted services without the express permission of the governing body, provided this has been approved by the appropriate phase of the Schools' Forum.

All charges for salaries and wages of school-based staff to school budget shares will wherever possible be based on actual rather than estimated costs.

Schools may wish to draw to the attention of the Authority expenses they feel they have incurred as a result of the acts or omissions of the Authority.

6.2 Circumstances in which charges may be made

The circumstances under which charges may be applicable are outlined below:

- i. 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);
- ii. Other expenditure incurred to secure resignations where there is good reason to charge this to the school (see Annex D);
- iii. Awards by courts and industrial tribunals against the Authority or out of court settlements, arising from acts or omissions by the governing body or head teacher contrary to the Authority's advice
- iv. 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;
- v. 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;
- vi. Expenditure incurred by the Authority 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;
- vii. 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;

- viii. Recovery of penalties imposed on the Authority by the Board of Inland Revenue, the Contributions Agency or HM Customs and Excise, Teachers Pensions, the Environment Agency or other regulatory authorities as a result of school acts or omissions.
- ix. Correction of Authority errors in calculating charges to a budget share (eg pension deductions)
- x. Additional transport costs incurred by the Authority arising from decisions by the governing body on the length of the school day, and failure to notify the Authority of non-pupil days resulting in unnecessary transport costs.
- xi. Legal costs which are incurred by the Authority because the governing body did not accept the advice of the Authority.
- xii. 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.
- xiii. Compensation paid to a lender where a school enters into a contract for borrowing or leasing beyond its legal powers, and the contract is of no effect, and the full initial cost of any credit arrangement the school enters into without the prior written agreement of the Chief Finance Officer.
- xiv. 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.
- xv. Costs incurred by the Authority in securing provision specified in an Education, Health and 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.
- xvi. Costs incurred by the Authority due to submission by the school of incorrect data.
- xvii. Recovery of amounts spent from specific grants on ineligible purposes.
- xviii. Costs incurred by the Authority as a result of the governing body being in breach of the terms of a contract.
- xix. 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.
- xx. 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.

SECTION 7: TAXATION

7.1 VALUE ADDED TAX

Schools are required to complete a monthly return of expenditure and income showing the amount of VAT incurred and any VAT arising for services supplied by schools. In respect of VAT incurred, schools must hold a valid VAT invoice to support their claim.

On receipt of the monthly return the Authority will reclaim the net VAT and arrange for the school to be reimbursed.

VAT **cannot be recovered** on expenditure by the governors of a voluntary aided school when carrying out their statutory responsibilities to maintain the external fabric of their buildings.

Schools should seek advice of the Chief Finance Officer in relation to VAT if there is any doubt as to how a particular transaction should be treated.

7.2 CIS (Construction Industry Taxation Scheme)

Schools are required to agree a procedure with the Chief Finance Officer to enable any expenditure they incur to which the Construction Industry Taxation Scheme (CIS) applies to be correctly accounted for. For many schools this can be achieved by asking the Chief Finance Officer to make such payments.

SECTION 8: THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES BY THE AUTHORITY

8.1 Provision of services from centrally retained budgets

The Authority will determine the basis upon which services from centrally retained funds (including existing premature retirement costs and redundancy payments) are provided to schools. The Authority will, wherever possible endeavour to do this in consultation with schools. The Authority will not discriminate in its provision of services on the basis of categories of schools except where this would be permitted under the School and Early Years Finance Regulations or the dedicated schools grant conditions of grant.

8.2 Provision of services bought back from the Authority using delegated budgets

The Authority will limit the term of any arrangement with a school to buy services or facilities from the authority to a maximum of three years from the date of the agreement, and periods not exceeding five years for any subsequent agreement or extensions relating to the same.

Schemes for contracts for supply of catering services may be limited to a maximum of five years, with a maximum agreement of seven years if the contract is extended.

When a service is provided for which expenditure is not retainable centrally by the Authority under the Regulations made under section 45a of the Act, it will be offered at prices which are intended to generate income which is no less than the cost of providing those services. The total cost of the service will be met by the total income, even if schools are charged differentially.

8.3 Packaging

The Authority will ensure that in providing any service on a buy-back basis that such services will be offered in a way which does not unreasonably restrict schools freedom of choice among the services available, and where practicable, this will include provision on a service-by-service basis as well as in packages of services. Services available to be purchased with delegated funds will be outlined in guidance from time to time (Reading Borough Council support services for schools).

8.4 Service level agreements

Service level agreements must normally be in place by no later than 31st March to be effective for the following financial year and schools must normally have at least a month to consider the terms of agreements.

With the exception of centrally funded premises and liability insurances, if services or facilities are provided under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) (whether free or on a buy-back basis), the terms of any such agreement starting on or after the inception of the scheme will be reviewed at least every three years if the agreement lasts longer than that.

Services provided by the Authority will be available on a basis which 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.

8.5 Teachers' Pensions

For the purposes of the Teachers' Pensions Scheme (TPS), the Authority is deemed to be the employers of teachers employed in maintained schools, whoever is the contractual employer. This brings with it the duty, under the Teachers' Pensions Regulations 2014, to make data returns relating to contributions, salaries and service for the staff concerned to Teachers Pensions.

Schools must ensure that their contracts with third party payroll agencies contain proper provision requiring the agency to supply a monthly return of salary and service to the Authority and in the format as reasonably specified by the Authority. Governing bodies must also ensure that details of Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) are passed to the Authority within the time limit showed in the AVC scheme. Annex C sets out the full details. Where a revision to the contract involves increased charges then the additional cost is to be met from within the existing schools' budget share.

SECTION 9: PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE / PUBLIC –PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

9.1 Private Finance Initiative (PFI) / Public –Private Partnership (PPP)

The Authority may develop PFI projects within the schools sector. An appropriate funding mechanism for such projects will be established in consultation with schools and the particular governing bodies concerned. The Authority anticipates agreeing with the governing body of schools as to the basis of such charges; and the treatment of monies withheld from contractors due to poor performance.

SECTION 10: INSURANCE

10.1 Insurance cover

The Chief Finance Officer has the responsibility for ensuring that the Authority is adequately protected by insurance. It is essential that the School governing body is adequately protected. Without insurance, schools could find themselves in a position where they are exposing the School and the Authority to potential liabilities which could have serious financial implications for Schools and Authority, e.g. a major fire or injury. In addition, individual teachers or governors may unwittingly open themselves to the possibility of being sued personally. The Chief Finance Officer can determine the minimum levels of insurance cover for schools. The **Minimum Requirement** will be based on the cover currently provided by the Authority, or such amounts that the Chief Finance Officer reasonably determines due to changes in the nature of the risk. Schools will not be allowed to place their insurance cover elsewhere unless they can demonstrate that these meet the Minimum Requirements.

When considering the options open to them governing bodies should make their decision bearing in mind their own individual circumstances and ensure that they are clear as to the extent of cover and other services included within each option.

In the event of the School deciding not to take advantage of the Authority's insurance service, the School must demonstrate that it has arranged cover to as good a standard as that which would have been arranged by the LA.

Schools making their own alternative insurance arrangements must produce evidence of such insurance to the Chief Finance Officer following inception and each subsequent annual renewal. The evidence required to demonstrate parity of cover should be reasonable, not place an undue burden upon the School, nor act as a barrier to the school exercising their choice of supplier.

An Authorised Insurer (i.e. a company that is licensed to undertake the appropriate insurance business in the United Kingdom) must provide any insurance cover. It must also meet the requirements of the Authority's insurance advisor's security board.

If the alternative insurance does not meet the minimum specification, the Authority will have the right to take out the necessary insurance cover on behalf of the School and charge the premium to the School delegated budget.

Details of the insurance cover required for Reading schools (available as a buy-back) is updated annually in the School Insurance Guide which is published on the Reading SLA portal, also available on request from the Chief Finance Officer.

Instead of taking out insurance, a school may join the Secretary of State's Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for risks that are covered by the RPA. Schools may join

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the RPA after 1st April 2020. Schools may do this individually when any insurance contract of which they are part expires. All primary and/or secondary maintained schools may join the RPA collectively by agreeing through the Schools' Forum to de-delegate funding.

SECTION 11: MISCELLANEOUS

11.1 Right of access to information

Governing bodies are required to supply upon request and within a reasonable timescale, all financial and other information including the specific requirements outlined throughout this document, which might reasonably be required to enable the Authority or, its auditors 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 (eg earmarked funds) on the school.

11.2 Liability of governors

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

11.3 Governors' Allowances

Schools with delegated budgets

Under schedule 50(5) of the Act, only allowances in respect of purposes specified in regulations may be paid to governors from a school's delegated budget share. Payment of any other allowances is forbidden. Schools are also barred from payment of expenses which duplicate those paid by the Secretary of State to additional governors appointed by him to schools under special measures.

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.

11.4 Responsibility for legal costs

Where the governing body fails to act in accordance with the advice of the Authority, then the Authority is authorised to charge school's budget shares for appropriate legal costs incurred by the school's governing body. The Authority will wherever possible discuss in advance with schools its intention to make such a charge, and may in exceptional circumstances, following consultation with schools, waive this right. The costs referred to are those of legal actions, including costs awarded against the authority, not the cost of legal advice provided.

The Head of Legal Services will issue from time to time guidance to schools about procedures for obtaining legal advice, including circumstances where there is a conflict of interest between the governing body and the Authority.

11.5 Health and Safety

The Authority, governors, senior managers and all employees have general duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Those duties are underpinned by more specific requirements set out in regulations or other legislation. In expending the school's budget share, governing bodies are required to give due regard to the requirements as specified in the aforementioned as well as those incorporated in Authority policy and other guidelines issued by the Authority that are deemed to be applicable to schools.

11.6 Right of attendance for the Chief Finance Officer

Governing bodies are required to permit the Chief Finance Officer, or any person nominated by the Chief Finance Officer to attend meetings of the governing body at which any agenda items are relevant to the exercise of her or his responsibilities. To facilitate this, the Authority will, unless this is impracticable, give prior notice of its intention to attend, and the governing body will supply upon request advance details including appropriate documentation of specific items to be discussed at such meetings.

Relevant items are those relating to financial probity, or overall financial management of the Authority. Schools will always advise the Chief Finance Officer if the governing body is considering a probity matter where there is an allegation of fraud or irregularity in the use of delegated or devolved funds.

11.7 Special Educational 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 need to suspend delegation where a situation is serious enough to warrant it.

11.8 Interest on late payments

Schools are reminded that the terms of the scheme cannot affect statutory requirements. The Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 requires debts to suppliers to be paid within 30 days of receiving the goods/services or receiving the invoice (whichever is the later). The supplier must receive a cheque or cleared funds by the 30th day. Suppliers are entitled to charge interest at Bank of England Base rate plus 8% on late payments, as well as reasonable debt recovery costs.

11.9 'Whistleblowing'

RBC has a 'whistleblowing' policy available on the Authority's website – www.reading.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy/corporatecomments/whistleblowing.

The purpose of the policy is to encourage all staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns, to question and act upon concerns about practice; to provide a method of raising concerns and receiving feedback on any action taken; to ensure that a response to concerns is received and to reassure staff that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith. This scheme should be followed by persons working at a school or school governors who wish to complain about financial management or financial propriety at the school.

As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with their immediate manager or Chair of the board of governors. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. If advice and guidance is needed on how matters of concern may be pursued the Chief Auditor at the Authority should be contacted.

11.10 Child Protection

Schools must release staff to attend child protection case conferences and other related events.

11.11 Redundancy/Early Retirement Costs (new)

The 2002 Education Act sets out how premature retirement and redundancy costs should normally be funded. The Authority has its own local arrangements and it is expected that schools will normally meet all redundancy/early retirement costs from their delegated budgets, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Annex D sets out the statutory guidance on the funding of premature retirement and redundancy costs.

SECTION 12: REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

12.1 Responsibility for Repairs and Maintenance

With the exception of capital expenditure as defined by the 'CIPFA Code of Practice on local authority accounting', Reading Borough Council will delegate all funding for repairs and maintenance to schools.

Schools should set their own de-minimus limit in assigning whether work is classified as revenue or capital, the default being that used by the Authority.

For voluntary aided schools, the liability of the Authority for repairs and maintenance is the same as for other maintained schools.

Voluntary aided governor responsibilities are as set out in the DfE document 'Funding for premises-related work at Voluntary Aided (VA) Schools in England' effective from 1st April 2002. VA governors will continue to be eligible for grant from the DfE in respect of their statutory responsibilities and in addition they will have responsibility for other repair and maintenance items on the same basis as community and foundation schools. VA governing bodies are liable for:

- The existing buildings (internal and external);
- Those buildings previously known as 'excepted' (kitchens, dining areas, medical/dental rooms, swimming pools, caretakers' dwelling houses);
- Perimeter walls and fences, even if they are around the playing fields;
- Playgrounds;
- Furniture, fixtures and fittings - but not normally ICT equipment;
- Other capital items (which can include boiler replacements and replacement of services).

The Authority is liable for:

- Playing fields

SECTION 13: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

13.1 Application of Schemes for Financing Schools to the Community Facilities Power

Schools which choose to exercise the power conferred by s.27 (1) of the Education Act 2002 to provide community facilities will be subject to controls. Regulations made under s.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 its 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 s.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 School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by paragraph 2 of Schedule 3 to the Education Act 2002. This amendment extended 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.

This part 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.

13.2 Consultation with the authority – financial aspects

Schools no longer need to consult the Authority when establishing community facilities. Nor do they have to have regard to advice given to them by their Authority. However, as public bodies, they are expected to act reasonably, and this includes consulting those affected by decisions they make.

13.3 Funding agreements – authority powers

Schools seeking to enter into any funding agreement with a third party either supplying funding or supplying funding and taking part in the provision, must submit any such proposed agreement to the Director of Education for comment. Schools must give the Authority a minimum of 4 weeks response time in such consultation.

Schools seeking Authority advice and submitting proposals to the Authority for comment must take into account the comments of the Authority and inform the Authority what action has been taken following Authority advice. Whilst the Authority has no right of veto for such agreements, if an agreement has been or is to be concluded against the wishes of the Authority, or as 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.

13.4 Other prohibitions, restrictions and limitations

In cases where the Authority considers that a proposed project carries significant financial risks to the Authority, it may require the governing body concerned to make arrangements to protect the financial interests of the Authority by either carrying out the activity concerned through the vehicle of a limited company formed for the purpose, or by obtaining indemnity insurance for risks associated with the project as specified by the Authority.

13.5 Supply of financial information to the Authority

Schools which exercise the community facilities power should provide the Authority every six months with a summary statement showing the income and expenditure for the school arising from the facilities in question for the previous six months and on an estimated basis, for the next six months.

Should the Authority consider there to be cause for concern as to the school's management of the financial consequences of the exercise of the community facilities power, it may request financial statements every three months and the submission of a recovery plan for the activity in question if required.

Financial information relating to community facilities must be included in returns made by schools under the CFR framework.

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.

13.6 Audit

Schools, in concluding funding agreements with other persons pursuant to the exercise of the community facilities power, should ensure that such agreements contain adequate provision for access by the Authority to the records and other property of those persons held on the 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.

13.7 Treatment of income and surpluses

Schools may retain all net income derived from community facilities except where otherwise agreed with a funding provider.

Schools may carry such retained net income over from one financial year to the next as a separate community facility supply or transfer all or part of it to the budget share balance.

If the school is a community or community special school and the Authority ceases to maintain the school, any accumulated retained income obtained from exercise of the community facilities power reverts to the Authority.

13.8 Health and safety

The health and safety provisions of the main scheme (see section 11.5) also apply to the community facilities power.

The governing body will be responsible for the costs of securing Disclosure and Barring Service clearance, where appropriate for all adults involved in community activities taking place during the school day.

13.9 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. **The school should seek the Authority's advice before finalising any insurance arrangement for community facilities** and should allow a two week response time for the Authority. The Authority may 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.

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

13.10 Taxation

Schools should seek the advice of the Authority initially and the local VAT office or professional VAT advice on any issues relating to the possible imposition of Value Added Tax on income and expenditure in connection with community facilities and any company set up to manage such facilities.

Schools must fulfil the Authority's directions on VAT issues that impact on the Authority's VAT return or position.

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 back account, the school is likely to be held liable for payment of income tax and National Insurance, in line with HM Revenue and Customs rules.

Schools should follow Authority advice in relation to the Construction Industry Scheme where this is relevant to the exercise of community facilities power.

13.11 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 3.5 and 3.6 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 these sections, except that a provision requiring that a mandate show the Authority as owner of the funds in the account should exempt the community facilities funds from that if they are not in the same account as the budget share.

ANNEXES

- A Schools Covered by the Scheme
- B Interest Charges on Advances
- C Requirement to provide data on Teacher Pensions
- D Responsibility for Redundancy and Early Retirement Costs
- E Schedule – DfE Leasing exceptions

ANNEX A

SCHOOLS COVERED BY THE SCHEME

Nursery Schools:		
Blagrove	Caversham	Norcot
Blagdon	New Bridge	
Primary Schools:		
Alfred Sutton	Geoffrey Field Infant	Redlands Primary
All Saints Infants	Geoffrey Field Junior	Ridgeway Primary
Caversham Park Primary	Hill Primary,The	Southcote Primary
Caversham Primary	Katesgrove Primary	St. Anne's RC Primary
Christ The King RC Primary	Manor Primary	St. Martin's RC Primary
Coley Primary	Micklands Primary	St. Michael's Primary
E P Collier Primary	Moorlands Primary	Thameside Primary
Emmer Green Primary	Oxford Road Primary	Whitley Park Primary
English Martyrs' RC Primary	Park Lane Primary	Wilson Primary
Secondary Schools:		
Blessed Hugh Faringdon		
Special Schools:		
The Holy Brook		

ANNEX C

REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE DATA ON TEACHER PENSIONS

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

The conditions only apply to governing bodies of maintained schools that have not entered into an arrangement with Reading Borough Council 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. The Authority will advise schools each year of the timing, format and specification of the information required. A governing body shall also ensure that any such arrangement or agreement is varied to require that Additional Voluntary Contributions (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.

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. Reading Borough Council 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 Additional Voluntary Contributions (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.

ANNEX D

RESPONSIBILITY FOR REDUNDANCY AND EARLY RETIREMENT COSTS

This guidance note summarises the position relating to the charging of voluntary early retirement and redundancy costs. It sets out what is specified in legislation and provides some examples of when it might be appropriate to charge an individual school's budget, the central schools budget or the Authority's non-schools budget.

Section 37 of the 2002 Education Act says:

(4) costs incurred by the local education authority in respect of any premature retirement of a member of the staff of a maintained school shall be met from the school's budget share for one or more financial years except in so far as the authority agree with the governing body in writing (whether before or after the retirement occurs) that they shall not be so met

(5) costs incurred by the local education authority in respect of the dismissal, or for the purpose of securing the resignation, of any member of the staff of a maintained school shall not be met from the school's budget share for any financial year except in so far as the authority have good reason for deducting those costs, or any part of those costs, from that share.

(6) The fact that the authority have a policy precluding dismissal of their employees by reason of redundancy is not to be regarded as a good reason for the purposes of subsection (5); and in this subsection the reference to dismissal by reason of redundancy shall be read in accordance with section 139 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (c. 18).

The default position, therefore, is that premature retirement costs must be charged to the school's delegated budget, while redundancy costs must be charged to the Authority's budget. In the former case, the Authority has to agree otherwise for costs to be centrally funded, while in the latter case, there has to be a good reason for it not to be centrally funded, and that cannot include having a no redundancy policy. Ultimately, it would be for the courts to decide what was a good reason, but the examples set out below indicate the situations in which exceptions to the default position might be taken.

Charge of dismissal/resignation costs to delegated school budget

- If a school has decided to offer more generous terms than the authority's policy, then it would be reasonable to charge the excess to the school
- If a school is otherwise acting outside the Authority's policy
- Where the school is making staffing reductions which the Authority does not believe are necessary to either set a balanced budget or meet the conditions of a licensed deficit

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS - June 2024

- Where staffing reductions arise from a deficit caused by factors within the school's control
- Where the school has excess surplus balances and no agreed plan to use these
- Where a school has refused to engage with the Authority's redeployment policy

Charge of premature retirement costs to Authority non-schools budget

- Where a school has a long-term reduction in pupil numbers and charging such costs to their budget would impact on standards
- Where a school is closing, does not have sufficient balances to cover the costs and where the central schools budget does not have capacity to absorb the deficit
- Where charging such costs to the school's budget would prevent the school from complying with a requirement to recover a licensed deficit within the agreed timescale
- Where a school is in special measures, does not have excess balances and employment of the relevant staff is being/has been terminated as a result of Authority or government intervention to improve standards

Costs of early retirements or redundancies may only be charged to the central part of the schools budget where the expenditure is to be incurred as a result of decisions made before 1st April 2013. Costs may not exceed the amount budgeted in the previous financial year.

It is important that the Authority discusses its policy with its Schools' Forum. Although each case should be considered on its merits, this should be within an agreed framework. It may be reasonable to share costs in some cases, and some authorities operate a panel to adjudicate on applications.

A de-delegated contingency could be provided, if Schools' Forum agree, to support individual schools where "a governing body has incurred expenditure which it would be unreasonable to expect them to meet from the school's budget share".

For staff employed under the community facilities power, the default position is that any costs must be met by the governing body, and can be funded from the school's delegated budget if 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. Section 37 now states:

- (7) Where a local education authority incur costs—*
- (a) in respect of any premature retirement of any member of the staff of a maintained school who is employed for community purposes, or*
- (b) in respect of the dismissal, or for the purpose of securing the resignation, of any member of the staff of a maintained school who is employed for those purposes,*

they shall recover those costs from the governing body except in so far as the authority agree with the governing body in writing (whether before or after the retirement, dismissal or resignation occurs) that they shall not be so recoverable.

(7A) Any amount payable by virtue of subsection (7) by the governing body of a maintained school to the local education authority may be met by the governing body out of the school's budget share for any funding period if and to the extent that the condition in subsection (7B) is met.

(7B) The condition is that the governing body are satisfied that meeting the amount out of the school's budget share will not to a significant extent interfere with the performance of any duty imposed on them by section 21(2) or by any other provision of the Education Acts.

(8) Where a person is employed partly for community purposes and partly for other purposes, any payment or costs in respect of that person is to be apportioned between the two purposes; and the preceding provisions of this section shall apply separately to each part of the payment or costs.

ANNEX E

Schedule – DfE Leasing exceptions

- All existing leases in place on 1 April 2024 for items included in this list
- Leases related to IT equipment (for example laptops, tablets, desktop computers, printers, photocopiers, servers, door entry security systems, CCTV Systems, whiteboards and touch screen boards)
- Leases related to telephony (for example mobile phones, landline phones and telephone systems)
- Leases related to catering and cleaning equipment (for example tills, water coolers, vending machines, dishwashers, washing machines, ovens, fridges, freezers, water boilers, small kitchen appliances, crockery and cutlery)
- Leases related to furniture (for example desks, tables and chairs) 6. Leases related to bathroom and sanitary items (for example hand dryers, towel dispensers, sanitary bins)
- Leases related to gym equipment (for example treadmills, free weights and weight machines, rowing machines and exercise bikes)
- Leases related to groundskeeping equipment (for example lawn mowers, string trimmers, leaf blowers and salt spreaders)
- Leases related to LED lighting system (for example lightbulbs, control mechanisms and control panels) - consent is granted where the product has been sourced with support from the Department for Education through Get help buying for schools or from a recommended route on our Find a framework website
- Leases related to minibuses and other vehicles for the use of the school
- Leases related to temporary classrooms and equivalent structures (but not land leases they sit on, which may require separate consent - see school land transactions guidance)



Reading Schools' Forum

June 20, 2024

Agenda Item 9

Schools' Forum Constitution
2024/25

For decision

For discussion

For information

SUMMARY

This report sets out changes required to the composition of the membership to comply with the regulations, and attaches the amended constitution document to be approved for the 2024/25 academic year.

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VERSION

Version number 1

DATE

June 20, 2024

REVIEW DATE

June 2024

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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 AGREE: The membership as shown in Table 1
- 1.2 AGREE: The Schools' Forum constitution for the 2024/25 financial year (Appendix 1).
Note: Voting applies to all Schools' Forum members.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Schools' Forum is a statutory and public meeting. The 'Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012' govern the composition, constitution, and procedures. The respective roles of Schools Forums, local authorities and the Department for Education are summarised in the document 'schools forum powers and responsibilities'¹.
- 2.2 It is good practice for school forums to set its own constitution following the guidelines contained in the regulations and operational guide. This will include documenting the local arrangements for:
 - Terms of Reference
 - Membership – size and composition
 - Procedures
- 2.3 The current constitution for Reading Schools Forum is provided in Appendix 1. This needs to be updated annually for membership changes required and if any changes to the regulations require a revision.

3. Membership for 2024/25

- 3.1. An annual review is required to ensure that the composition of the membership is still meeting the statutory requirements as follows:
 - There is no maximum or minimum size. There needs to be a balance between keeping it to a manageable size and ensuring all the various types of schools are represented. The average size of Schools' Forums in England is 20 to 25 members.
 - All types of schools must be represented – with at least one head teacher (or their representative) and at least one Governor overall.
 - Mainstream academies, special academies, and AP academies must each be represented if a school of this type exists in the LA. There is no requirement to have members from both primary and secondary academies.
 - Must have a representative from 16-19 providers.
 - Must have a representative from early years PVI providers.
 - School and academy representatives must comprise of at least two thirds of the school forum membership.
 - Maintained primary schools, maintained secondary schools and academies must be broadly proportionately represented on schools forum, based on the total number of pupils registered at them.
 - Additional non-school members may include diocese representatives, trade unions, and other professional associations.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015>

- 3.2. Based on current numbers on roll there is no requirement to split the proportion of members and it is proposed to remain as set out in Table 1.
- 3.3. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the current membership representation to comply with the regulations.


Table 1: Current and Proposed Membership Breakdown

	Current and Proposed Representation			
	Head Teacher	Governor	Total	%
School Members:				
Primary Maintained	3	3	6	42.8
Secondary Maintained	1		1	7.1
Primary Academy	2		2	14.3
Secondary Academy	5		5	35.7
Sub Total	11	3	14	100.0
Other School Members:				
Nursery	1	1	2	
Special Maintained	1		1	
Special Academy	1		1	
Alternative Provision	1		1	
Total School Members	15	4	19	
Non School Members:				
Early Years PVI	1			
16-19 Provision	1			
Trade Union	1			
Total Non-School Members	3	0	3	
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP			22	
Proportion of School Members (must be at least 66.7%)				86.4%

- 3.4. The current pupil number percentage breakdown for the purpose of determining the proportional representation of school members is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Pupil Number Breakdown

January 2024 Census	Pupil Numbers	%
Primary Maintained	9,180	43%
Secondary Maintained	925	4%
Primary Academy	4,057	19%
Secondary Academy	7,214	34%
Total Pupil Numbers	21,376	100%


- 
- 3.5. All other members will also remain as per the current representation, maintaining the total membership at a total of 22.

4. Constitution for 2024/25

- 4.1. The proposed constitution for 2024/25 is in Appendix 1 and contains the membership.
- 4.2. Schools Forum members are required to approve its constitution for 2024/25.
- 4.3. Note that the ESFA has a team who scrutinise the proceedings of every local authority's Schools' Forum to ensure compliancy with the regulations.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Reading Schools' Forum Constitution 2024/25



Reading Schools' Forum Constitution

The Schools' Forum is a decision making and consultative body in relation to matters concerning schools' budgets as defined in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023. The Schools Forum Regulations 2012 govern the composition, constitution and procedures of Schools' Forums.¹

This document is divided into 3 sections:

- A. Terms of Reference for the Reading Schools' Forum
- B. Membership of the Reading Schools' Forum
- C. Operating Conventions of the Reading Schools' Forum

Further information, including the Schools' Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) can be found on their website.²

¹ These Regulations can be accessed at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/59/made>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015>

A. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE READING SCHOOLS' FORUM

Status of the Schools' Forum

The Schools' Forum is established in accordance with Sections 47(1) 47A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

Annual Consultation on School Funding

The authority must consult the Schools Forum annually in respect of the authority's functions relating to school funding including:

- Changes to the primary and secondary funding formula (only school members plus the early years PVI representative can vote).
- The allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), including movements between blocks (except for movement from the schools block – see below).
- Contracts where the LA is entering into a contract to be funded from the schools budget.
- Funding arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools, and the arrangements for paying top up funding.
- Funding arrangements for the use of Pupil Referral Units and the education of children otherwise than at school in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools, and the arrangements for paying top up funding.
- Central spend on children and young people with high needs.
- Funding arrangements for early year's provision.
- Central spend on licences negotiated centrally by the Secretary of State.
- Administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to the schools via the authority.
- Changes to the Minimum Funding Guarantee and any other changes from the regulations which the local authority intends to submit to the DfE for approval.
- Any other matter concerning the funding of schools as the Schools' Forum sees fit.

Annual Decisions on School Funding

School Forum Members must decide (usually annually) on the following proposals made by the LA:

- Movement of up to 0.5% from the schools block to other blocks.
- The amount of expenditure the local authority can centrally retain from the school budget, including growth fund, falling rolls fund, admissions service, servicing of schools forum, contributions to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools, contributions to combined budgets, prudential borrowing costs, and central spend on early years.
- The criteria for allocating funding from the growth fund and falling rolls fund.
- The de-delegation from mainstream maintained schools budgets for allowable central budgets, to be decided by the schools representatives of the relevant phase on behalf of all the schools they represent. This includes the general duties (support services) for maintained schools.
- Revisions to the authority's Scheme for Financing Schools.
- Elects the Chair of Schools' Forum, and determines the voting procedures.

B. MEMBERSHIP OF THE READING SCHOOLS' FORUM

Composition

The Schools' Forums regulations 2012 state that maintained primary schools, maintained secondary schools, and academies must be broadly proportionately represented on the Schools' Forum having regard to the total number of registered pupils, though there must be at least one representative for each type of school. There must also be at least one representative of head teachers and one representative of governors among the school members. Schools and academies members must number at least two-thirds of the total membership

Reading Schools' Forum shall in total comprise of 23 members being 20 school members (including academies) and 3 non-school members. The school members shall be Headteachers, Governors or Early Years representatives drawn from the schools / provisions in the Reading Borough Council Local Authority area. The Primary and Secondary head teacher members may also include representatives of head teachers - senior members of staff, such as School Business Managers.

School Members

The current number of representatives in each phase is as follows:

- a) Maintained Primary Representatives**
7 representatives from primary schools of which at least 1 must be a head teacher and at least 1 is a governor.
- b) Maintained Secondary Representatives**
1 representative from secondary schools.
- c) Maintained Special School Representatives**
1 representative from special schools.
- d) Nursery School Representatives**
2 representatives from the nursery schools.
- e) Academy Primary & Secondary School Representatives**
7 representatives from the academies, of which 2 from the primary sector and 5 from the secondary sector.
- f) Academy Special School Representatives**
1 representative from academy special schools.
- g) Alternative Provision Representatives**
1 representative from the Pupil Referral Unit.

Election of Schools Members

The maintained primary school head teacher representatives shall be elected by their Heads Forum.

The maintained primary school governor representatives shall be elected through nominations from and a vote by all governors in the relevant sector.

The maintained secondary school representative shall be decided by the school (there is only one school).

Academy representatives shall be decided by the Academies proprietors.

The special school representatives shall be decided by the relevant schools (there is only one maintained special and one academy special).

The nursery school representative shall be elected by mutual agreement between them.

The pupil referral unit representative shall be decided by the school (there is only one school).

The Clerk of the Schools' Forum must make a record of the process by which the constituents of each group elect their nominees to the Schools' Forum. An election scheme must take into account the following factors:

- The process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election.
- The timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing.
- The arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots.
- The arrangements for counting and publicising the results.
- Any arrangements for unusual circumstances, such as only one candidate standing in an election or where there is a tie between two or more candidates.
- Whether existing members can stand for re-election.

If an election does not take place by any date set by the Authority or any such election results in a tie between two or more candidates the Authority will appoint the schools member.

Non-School Members

In addition to the 20 school members a representative of the following groups will have full voting rights within the Schools' Forum except for voting on the funding formulae where only the Early Years PVI Provider representative can vote:

- Trade Union
- Early Years PVI Provider
- Non school Post 16

The representative will be elected by their group and the record of the appointment process will be held by the Clerk of the Schools' Forum.

Substitute Members

Representative groups may nominate permanent substitutes who have sufficient experience and knowledge of schools funding to attend meetings.

and/or

A stand-in substitute who attends as a full voting member if a headteacher or permanent substitute is unavailable. Stand-in substitutes may attend some meetings as an observer to gain an insight into the work of the Forum.

The clerk must be notified in writing 24 hours before the start of the meeting that a substitution will be required. Substitute members will have full voting rights when taking the place of the substantive member for whom they are the designated substitute.

Participation of Observers

Observers shall be invited to attend Forum meetings. Observers may participate in the debate but will not have voting rights should any business of the Forum require a vote. The following groups shall be asked if they would like to nominate an observer (and a named substitute) to the Forum:

- The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Council Officers and Elected Members

Officers may attend and speak at the Schools' Forum meetings in an advisory capacity only. The following or their representatives will be invited to attend the Forum meetings:

- Director of Education or their representative
- Head of Finance or their representative
- Lead Member for Education
- Any person invited by the Schools' Forum to provide financial or technical advice

Terms of Office

The term of office for members of the Forum is three years. The same members can be reappointed providing they are re-elected by the group that they represent. This also applies to any permanent substitutes.

As well as the term of office coming to an end, a schools member ceases to be a member of the Schools' Forum if he or she resigns from the Forum, giving at least one month's written notice, or no longer occupies the office which he or she was nominated to represent. An election should be held within the outgoing members electing group to nominate a successor. The Clerk will then inform the Forum members of the result of the election within one month.

If a change in membership representation (e.g. due to proportionality) requires a reduction in members from a particular group, that group will mutually decide between them which member(s) will step down. The member(s) stepping down will be welcome to continue to attend as a substitute/observer.

Review of the Membership

Membership will be a standing item on the agenda for each meeting of the Schools' Forum, to review the current list of members which will include which group they represent and their term of office.

The proportionality of the membership will be reviewed annually (in June/July) so that elections if required can be held by the end of the summer term ready for the new academic year.

C. OPERATING CONVENTIONS OF THE READING SCHOOLS FORUM

Ordinary Meetings

An ordinary meeting of the Schools' Forum shall be held, at a minimum, four times a year.

Schools forums can now meet remotely. This includes (but is not limited to) telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming

Administration of Meetings

Meetings of the Schools' Forum shall be convened by the Local Authority, who will arrange the clerking and recording of meetings. The cycle of annual meetings are based on the financial year. All the meeting dates for the next financial year are set by the end of March every year.

Items for consideration by the Schools' Forum shall be submitted to the Clerk no later than 10 working days prior to the meeting. The agenda and working papers should be circulated a week in advance of the meeting date. Every effort should be made to circulate minutes to Forum members within 10 working days of the meeting.

The Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected from within the membership of the Schools Forum (but may not be either an elected member or an officer of the local authority).

Quorum

The Schools' Forum shall be quorate if at least 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes observers and vacancies). If the Schools' Forum is not quorate the meeting can proceed and the members present can give advice to the local authority, but the authority is not obliged to take that advice into consideration. Decisions on the schools budgets may not be taken unless 40% of the school members are present.

Voting

Each member shall only have one vote. Voting shall be by show of hands. If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Chair will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Chair chooses to exercise a casting vote.

When the vote is on the schools funding formula only the schools members and the Early Years PVI Representative are eligible to vote.

Sub-Committees and Working Groups

The Schools' Forum may have sub-committees or working groups. The Schools' Forum shall receive reports from the sub-committees or working groups to approve formally.

Declaration of Interest

Any member of the Schools' Forum who has an interest in any proposal beyond the generality of the group that they represent or in which they might have a personal or prejudicial interest shall declare the interest at the beginning of the relevant item. The member can explain any issues to the meeting and then must leave the meeting until the item has finished. The member cannot vote on that item.

Where it is clear that a decision in which a member has an interest is likely to arise at a particular meeting, the meeting concerned may invite a substitute member (with no interest to declare) in accordance with the constitution to attend the meeting in their place.

Elected members are subject to the governance of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Status of Reports

All report authors will be responsible for informing the clerk in advance of the status of reports to be included in the agenda i.e. confidential or non-confidential.

Expenses

The Local Authority shall maintain a budget for the reimbursement of all reasonable expenses relating to the operation of the Forum and charge these expenses to the Schools Budget. The Local Authority shall reimburse expenses of members of the Schools' Forum when members submit appropriate claims, in connection with attendance at the meetings. Supply cover should only be claimed when it has been necessary to employ a supply cover teacher to enable the Headteacher to attend the Forum.

Interpretation of the Constitution

The Chair or person residing at the meeting shall be the final arbiter regarding the interpretation of the Schools' Forum's constitution. The constitution shall be interpreted in conjunction with the relevant provisions contained in the legislation relating to the Schools' Forum's proceedings. The requirements of legislation will prevail in the event of there being any inconsistency between the legislation and the constitution.

Amendment of the Constitution

With the exception of matters subject to legislative provision or approval by the authority, the Schools' Forum may vary its constitution by a simple majority vote by the members provided that prior notice of the nature of the proposed variation is made and included on the agenda for the meeting.

Publicity relating to the Schools Forum

The Schools Forum is a public meeting and the Local Authority is responsible for putting the Schools' Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly on the Reading Borough Council website and generally draw schools attention to forthcoming Schools' Forum meetings and agendas and the minutes of Schools' Forum discussions.

Document to be approved by the Reading School's Forum on 20 June 2024