

Cheshire West and Chester Schools Forum

16 January 2024

Agenda Item 5

De-delegation proposals for 2024-25

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to agree the services to be de-delegated by maintained schools for 2024-25.

Recommendations

2. Schools Forum (maintained school representatives) is requested to agree the services to be de-delegated to the Local Authority for 2024-25 as detailed for:
 - a) Contingencies to cover the cost of staff on suspension (primary and secondary representatives separately)
 - b) Free school meals eligibility assessments (primary and secondary representatives separately)
 - c) Covering the cost of staff on for maternity/paternity/adoption leave (primary representatives only)
 - d) Pooling of funding to cover the costs of trade union facilities time (primary and secondary representatives separately)
 - e) School improvement team (primary, secondary and special/alternative provision representatives separately)

Background

3. Since 2013, Schools Forum has agreed annually the de-delegation of funds for maintained schools. The principles of de-delegation previously agreed are included in **Appendix A**. This arrangement of pooling funds to cover specific purposes is proposed again for 2024-25 to cover maintained schools collectively from costs arising from the following:

	Primary	Secondary	Special/ Alternative Provision
Contingencies to cover the cost of staff on suspension	✓	✓	
Free school meals eligibility assessments	✓	✓	
Covering the cost of staff on for maternity/paternity/adoption leave	✓		
Pooling of funding to cover the costs of trade union facilities time	✓	✓	
School Improvement core and additional improvement activities	✓	✓	✓

Consultation with schools

4. A consultation on the options to de-delegate funds for the next financial year was issued to schools on 14 December 2023 and closed on 9 January 2024. Schools were asked to consider whether the amount delegated to them on a per pupil basis allows them to meet the costs or buy in the services they need individually. The rationale for de-delegation is to achieve economies of scale and to pool risk across schools for these costs.
5. A summary of the number of responses and percentage to each response to the consultation are shown below by sector. Based on the responses received, there is support for the continuation of existing de-delegation for Schools Forum to consider in agreeing the de-delegation arrangements for 2024-2025.

(i) Primary maintained schools

If you are a representative of a local authority maintained primary school, do you agree to continue with the de-delegation of the following in 2024-25?						
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Total
Contingencies to cover suspensions	0.00% 0	68.75% 11	25.00% 4	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16
Free school meals eligibility assessment	6.25% 1	81.25% 13	12.50% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16
Staff costs- supply cover for maternity/paternity/adoption leave	25.00% 4	68.75% 11	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16
Staff costs - trade union facilities (as is)	6.25% 1	50.00% 8	25.00% 4	12.50% 2	6.25% 1	16

(ii) Secondary maintained schools





If you are a representative of a local authority maintained secondary school, do you agree to continue with the de-delegation of the following in 2024-25?						
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Total
Contingencies to cover suspensions	20.00% 1	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5
Free school meals eligibility assessment	40.00% 2	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5
Staff costs - trade union facilities (as is)	20.00% 1	80.00% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5

6. Trade Unions

A secondary request from the Trade Unions has been received for additional funding from schools to enhance capacity for representation by 0.1 FTE per week, as a result of increased membership numbers. Please see summary of Primary and Secondary School responses below.




(i) Local Authority Maintained Primary Schools

Staff costs – trade union facilities - increase funding A secondary request from the Trade Unions has been received for additional funding from schools to enhance capacity for representation by 0.1 FTE per week, as a result of increased membership numbers. If you are a representative of a local authority maintained primary school, do you agree to increased funding for Trade Union Facilities time in line with this request?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		0.00%	0
2	Agree		25.00%	4
3	Neither agree or disagree		43.75%	7
4	Disagree		25.00%	4
5	Strongly disagree		6.25%	1

(ii) Local Authority Maintained Secondary Schools

Staff costs – trade union facilities - increase funding A secondary request from the Trade Unions has been received for additional funding from schools to enhance capacity for representation by 0.1 FTE per week, as a result of increased membership numbers. If you are a representative of a local authority maintained secondary school, do you agree to increased funding for Trade Union Facilities time in line with this request?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		0.00%	0
2	Agree		40.00%	2
3	Neither agree or disagree		0.00%	0
4	Disagree		40.00%	2
5	Strongly disagree		20.00%	1

De-delegation of funding for all maintained schools for school improvement activities




- In January 2022, the DfE confirmed that they would remove the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering (SIMB) Grant currently payable to local authorities to support school improvement activities. School and Early Years Finance Regulations were amended to allow local authorities to agree de-delegated funds from maintained schools to replace the grant. The SIMB grant was removed entirely for 2023-2024. De-delegation would put more decisions about improvement provision to schools into the hands of school leaders (via schools forums). As the beneficiaries of improvement support from

councils, the government believe it is right that schools contribute to the cost of such support but, in turn, they should have greater influence over the activity undertaken.

8. The current de delegated funding for the Cheshire West and Chester School Improvement budget for 2023-2024 is £260k and is used flexibly to support both core and additional improvement activities. There is a team structure of officers and school improvement advisors, both permanent staff and bought in services to respond flexibly to deliver school support and intervention.
9. In the consultation, schools were asked whether they wished to continue with current arrangements and keep the same per pupil rate as 23/24 for 24/25. Please see responses below.




Local Authority Maintained Primary Schools

6. If you are a representative of a local authority maintained primary school, do you agree to continue with the de-delegation in line with the option chosen in 2023-24 (option 2)? Please use the comments box for any further comments

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		0.00%	0
2	Agree		68.75%	11
3	Neither agree or disagree		25.00%	4
4	Disagree		6.25%	1
5	Strongly disagree		0.00%	0




Local Authority Maintained Secondary Schools

7. If you are a representative of a local authority maintained secondary school, do you agree to continue with the de-delegation in line with the option chosen in 2023-24 (option 3)? Please use the comments box for any further comments

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		0.00%	0
2	Agree		60.00%	3
3	Neither agree or disagree		0.00%	0
4	Disagree		20.00%	1
5	Strongly disagree		20.00%	1

Local Authority Maintained Special Schools

If you are a representative of a local authority maintained special school, do you agree to continue with the de-delegation in line with the option chosen in 2023-24 (option 3)? Please use the comments box for any further comments

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		33.33%	2
2	Agree		50.00%	3
3	Neither agree or disagree		16.67%	1
4	Disagree		0.00%	0
5	Strongly disagree		0.00%	0

10. In reviewing the consultation responses Schools Forum should consider how the funding will enable the Local Authority to undertake the intervention activities and statutory responsibilities for the Borough's maintained schools collectively. As with other de-delegation arrangements, where pooled funds are created schools will be able to access the service offer when needed and not all schools will necessarily require access to that service each year.

Proposed amounts for de-delegation 2024-2025

11. The proposed level of de-delegation for 2024-2025 is based on establishing pooled budgets at 2023-2024 expenditure levels, adjusted for pupil numbers and inflation/pay awards. The proposed 2024/25 rates for de-delegation are shown in the table below against 2023-2024 rates.

	2023-2024 rates			2024-25 rates		
	Lump sum	Per pupil	Per FSM pupil	Lump sum	Per pupil	Per FSM pupil
Primary total	£2,224	£29.28	£6.38	£2368.43	£30.55	£6.79
Contingencies to cover the cost of staff on suspension		£2.18			£2.32	
Free school meals eligibility assessments			£6.38			£6.79
Covering the cost of staff on for maternity leave	£2,224	£15.09		£2,368.43	£16.07	
Pooling of funding to cover the costs of trade union facilities time		£2.27			£2.42	
School Improvement		£9.74			£9.74	
Secondary total		£12.34	£6.38		£12.71	
Contingencies to cover the cost of staff on suspension		£1.62			£1.73	
Free school meals eligibility assessments			£6.38			£6.79

Pooling of funding to cover the costs of trade union facilities time		£4.23			£4.49	
School Improvement		£6.49			£6.49	
Special/Alternative Provision total		£6.49			£6.49	
School Improvement		£6.49			£6.49	

In relation to the requested additional Trade Union Funding please see below.

2024/25	Primary per pupil delegation	Secondary per pupil delegation
Trade Union per pupil additional amount	£0.16	£0.33

Next Steps

- The agreed rates for de-delegation to be included in the School Funding Formula submission to the ESFA for the 22 January deadline. De-delegated funds will be deducted from schools opening budgets and details included in the budget letter issued to individual schools before the statutory deadline of 28 February 2024.

Appendix A

Principles of de-delegation

Guidance on the operation of de-delegated services issued by the ESFA remains unchanged from previous years and includes the following requirements:

- the requirement to make a clear statement of how the funding is to be taken out of the formula
- reporting unspent de-delegated funding at the year end to Schools Forum
- local authorities retaining de-delegated funding up to 1 September for Academy conversions occurring up to this date. Full year de-delegation to be retained for conversions after 1 September. This is to allow services to plan operations for the financial year.
- local authorities are able to carry over unspent de-delegated central expenditure to be used for the same purpose. This ensures that funds can be carried forward without having to be allocated through the formula again and ensures funding that maintained schools de-delegate continues to be available for the use of maintained schools.

Principles for managing de-delegated fund

The principles for managing de-delegated funds as agreed with Schools Forum in 2014-2015 will continue so that:

- (i) Any underspend/overspend arising on individual funds is carried forward as allowed by the School Finance Regulations to offset/be offset against further de-delegation in the following financial year.
- (ii) Primary and Secondary de-delegation to be managed separately to ensure the de-delegation rates reflect expenditure within each sector.
- (iii) Total de-delegation to reduce as schools transfer to Academy in line with reduced pupil numbers and number of schools as the level of expenditure will reduce accordingly with fewer schools.