

Report of the Director of Children and Families

Report to the Leeds Schools Forum

Date: 10th October 2019

Subject: Schools in Financial Difficulties funding guidance

Report Author: Louise Hornsey

Contact telephone number: 0113 3788689

1 Background information

- 1.1 A Schools in Financial Difficulties fund can be established each year for maintained mainstream schools, following consultation with schools and approval by Schools Forum. All maintained mainstream schools contribute (de-delegate) some of their funding at a flat rate per pupil and can subsequently make a request to access this fund if they are in financial difficulty. Applications are considered by a panel of Schools Forum members with the final decision being taken by Children and Families.

2 Main issues

- 2.1 Guidance has been drafted on the Schools in Financial Difficulties fund following an increase in applications. This includes criteria that schools should meet in order to make an application, the information they should provide and the considerations for allocating funding. This guidance would be reviewed and distributed to schools at the start of each financial year, to ensure that schools are aware of the circumstances in which they can apply to the fund and that the council can prioritise funding.
- 2.2 Schools Forum is asked to provide a view on the proposed guidance for the Schools in Financial Difficulties fund as set out below.

3 Proposed guidance

- 3.1 A Schools in Financial Difficulties fund has been established from de-delegated contributions made by all maintained mainstream schools, following consultation with schools and approval by Schools Forum.

- 3.2 Maintained mainstream schools can make an application for funding if they meet the criteria in this guidance.
- 3.3 In order to be considered for funding the school must:
- a) Have engaged with support provided or arranged by the council;
 - b) Have followed any financial advice given by the local authority;
 - c) Have a projected deficit in the current financial year despite having adopted any budget strategies suggested above;
 - d) Have a deficit action plan approved by the council and report immediately where any financial plan may not be met; and
 - e) Provide budget monitoring reports and other information and returns as required by the council.
- 3.4 Priority in allocating funding will be given to schools that:
- a) Have received an Ofsted judgement of Requires Improvement, and/or
 - b) Cannot put in place a budget plan that recovers any cumulative deficit within three years.
- 3.5 This funding must be regarded as only being available in exceptional circumstances. Failure to have taken difficult decisions in previous years will not be considered as good reason for the release of funds.
- 3.6 Applications should be made on the standard form and should clearly identify what the additional funding will be used for and any consequences if the funding is not provided. Supporting evidence such as the school improvement plan or quotes should also be provided. Please consult your school finance officer if you need assistance or advice in completing the application form.
- 3.7 All school applications will be considered by a panel consisting of members of the Leeds Schools Forum who will make a recommendation on any funding to be awarded. The final decision will be taken by the Director of Children and Families or an officer who has been delegated responsibility for this in line with the council's governance arrangements.
- 3.8 Deadlines for receipt of applications will be notified to schools at the start of each financial year.

4 Recommendation

- 4.1 Schools Forum is asked to provide a view on the proposed guidance for allocating Schools in Financial Difficulties funding.