

Report of the Director of Children and Families

Report to the Leeds Schools Forum

Date: 16th January 2025

Subject: De-delegation of funding for maintained schools – 2025/26

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Summary of main issues

1. Schools Block funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is delegated to schools each year by the local authority. Schools Forum can however agree that the local authority retains some of this funding for maintained primary and secondary schools, in order to provide certain central services for schools. This is known as ‘de-delegation’ of funding.
2. This report informs Schools Forum members of the outcome of the recent consultation with all maintained primary and secondary schools on the de-delegation of funding in 2025/26. The majority of schools submitting a response wished to continue to de-delegate the funding for all services.
3. The local authority’s recommendation is that de-delegation continues in 2025/26 for these services. Maintained primary and secondary members of Schools Forum are responsible for deciding whether this should be the case and will be asked to vote for each service.

1 Main issues

- 1.1 The Education and Skills Funding Agency requires that the local authority consults all maintained primary and secondary schools on whether to delegate funding to schools for the services detailed below or whether to opt to de-delegate this so that the funding is retained centrally. A copy of the consultation paper is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The consultation was for maintained primary and secondary schools only as the regulations set by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) do not allow other settings, such as academies or SILCs, to de-delegate their funding in this way.
- 1.3 In total the 2025/26 consultation proposed de-delegated funding of £5.55m. This is an increase of £389k compared to 2024/25 proposals which totalled £5.16m
- 1.4 A summary is provided below of the proposals that were consulted on for each de-delegated budget for 2025/26 compared to 2024/25 along with the results of the consultation for each budget. Further information on each area that was consulted on is available in the attached consultation document (Appendix 1).
- 1.5 Of the 160 maintained mainstream schools in Leeds, responses were received from 58 schools (36%); 53 primary schools and 5 secondary schools. This is an increase against the response rate for 2024/25 of 41 (36 primary schools, 4 secondary schools and 1 through school). A summary table of the consultation results is provided in section 2 of this report.
- 1.6 Whilst the outcome of the consultation does indicate a reduction in support for the de-delegation of these budgets, the majority of respondents do continue to support the de-delegation of all budget proposals within the consultation. Therefore, it is recommended that members of Schools Forum as representatives of all maintained mainstream schools support the outcome of the consultation to enable funding for all the services listed below be retained centrally in 2025/26, in order for these services to be provided.
- 1.7 In acknowledgment of the reduced majority and in response to comments and queries received from schools through the consultation there will be a further review of all the de-delegated budgets. This review will also consider the timing of future de-delegation consultations, options for consideration will be presented to a future Schools Forum meeting. A summary of all comments received during the consultation is attached as appendix 2.
- 1.8 Where possible de-delegated budgets have been held at the same level as the previous year. However, due to the impact of academy conversions the pupil numbers used to calculate the per pupil rates may have reduced, resulting in the need to increase the per pupil rate to achieve the same total budget. Where de-delegation budgets have been increased this is due to recent trends in expenditure in that area and known pressures, such as pay inflation or a reduction in funding. The Local Authority looks for every opportunity to reduce de-delegated budgets wherever possible, based on prudent assumptions.
- 1.9 Differences in the contributions between schools reflect the fact that primary schools are able to delegate an additional service compared to secondary schools, in addition

to there being variances in schools' individual funding levels, due to both pupil and premises related factors.

1.10 **Contingency and support for schools in financial difficulty**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.10.1 The School Contingency Fund is retained centrally for maintained schools but only for a limited range of circumstances:
- a. Exceptional unforeseen costs which it would be unreasonable to expect governing bodies to meet (including some costs relating to Managed Staff Reductions),
 - b. Schools in financial difficulties,
 - c. Additional costs relating to new, reorganised or closing schools; and
 - d. A schools urgent improvement fund that schools can apply to if they require additional support from local authority services for urgent school improvement priorities.
- 1.10.2 The budget can be considered as one to pool risk, providing a safety net for schools.

Proposed budget

- 1.10.3 It is proposed that the funding would be de-delegated as an amount per pupil of £4.33.
- 1.10.4 Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of £250,000, with £50,000 of this being ringfenced for the Urgent School Improvement Fund.
- 1.10.5 It is proposed that the overall contingency budget is reduced to £500,000 for 2025/26, this is to reflect previous years underspend trends against this budget. These figures include an additional £250,000 to the contingency budget from the de delegated reserve 2024/25, ensuring an overall budget remains of £500,000 in 2025/26.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.10.6 If de-delegation does not continue there will be no central contingency fund available to schools. Schools would have to take all action necessary to balance their own budgets and there would be no central budget available for schools finding themselves in financial difficulty, requiring urgent support for school improvement or for funding capitalised pension costs where staff have been made redundant due to financial difficulties. The budget is not suitable for operation under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) or traded offer.

Consultation responses

- 1.10.7 Of the 58 responses received, 52 (90%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.10.8 As the majority of schools supported the proposals it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

1.11 **Maternity and other cover**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.11.1 This budget reimburses schools for the cost of staff that are on maternity, parental or adoption leave, working as a justice of the peace, magistrate or on reserve services duties.
- 1.11.2 This budget does also include shared parental leave, this is a legal family leave entitlement which can be accessed by the birth parent or adoptive parent and their partner. The birth or adoptive parent's leave is paid at maternity leave rates. However this budget does not include the costs of a school employee returning to work on full pay either before a school closure period or during a break in the shared parental leave blocks.

Proposed budget

- 1.11.3 The total budget proposed for 2025/26 is £2,950,000, which is a £246k (9.1%) increase compared to 2024/25. The increase in the total de-delegated funding is due to the additional costs of maternity leave payments.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.11.4 If de-delegation does not continue schools must meet all costs of maternity and other cover from their delegated budgets. There would cease to be any central support for schools that incur cover costs for staff away from school for the above reasons.

Consultation responses

- 1.11.5 Of the 58 responses received, 54 (93%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.11.6 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

1.12 **Suspended staff cover**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.12.1 This budget provides support for schools where employees are suspended, after the first three months. It can be costly for a school to continue to pay a member of staff

that is suspended pending investigations being completed and also paying for cover.

Proposed budget

- 1.12.2 The total budget proposed for 2025/26 is £150k, which is a £50k increase from 2024/25 and is based on recent trends. This equates to a rate of £2.60 per pupil.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.12.3 If the de-delegation does not continue there will be no central support for schools where staff have been suspended, and schools will have to meet the continuing cost of the staff concerned and any cover costs from their delegated budgets.

Consultation responses

- 1.12.4 Of the 58 responses received, 35 (60%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.12.5 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

1.13 Trade Union facilities

Purpose of the budget

- 1.13.1 The Trade Union Facilities budget covers the cost of providing convenor salaries, physical facilities and other associated costs. The allocation of union convenor time is based on a ratio of convenors to members of 1:1000. Where convenors work within a school, this budget provides the school with funds to cover the cost of release to undertake city-wide Trade Union duties.

Proposed budget

- 1.13.2 The total budget proposed for 2025/26 is £383,000. This budget is an increase of £13k from the 2024/25 proposals. The amount per pupil has increased to £6.64 from £6.17 in 2024/25.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.13.3 The future access to local trade union representatives to support staff at all levels of seniority within schools is at stake if the current budget is not de-delegated. By retaining this budget for TU release time centrally schools will benefit from access to a pool of experienced TU convenors who will: seek to resolve issues locally, consult and negotiate with all maintained schools on a range of employment matters, and

also represent their members in grievance, performance, absence, disciplinary and redundancy processes.

- 1.13.4 With regards to collective bargaining with the recognised TU's, the Council will continue to consult and / or negotiate on terms and conditions of employment on behalf of schools where LCC is the employer, or where the school purchase an SLA with LCC Schools HR Service.

Consultation responses

- 1.13.5 Of the 58 responses received, 36 (62%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.13.6 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

1.14 **School library service (primary schools only)**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.14.1 The School Library Service (SLS) provides a range of resources to underpin the curriculum, inspire creativity and raise attainment for primary-aged pupils.

Proposed budget

- 1.14.2 It is proposed that the funding would be de-delegated for primary schools as an amount per pupil of £8.26. Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of £363,000.
- 1.14.3 This is an increase of £30k in total funding compared to 2024/25 (£333,000). The amount per pupil has increased from £7.17 in 2024/25.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.14.4 If de-delegation does not continue primary schools would have to meet School Library Service costs from their delegated budget provided the service was able to continue by operating on a traded basis.

Consultation responses

- 1.14.5 Of the 53 primary responses received, 35 (66%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.14.6 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated for primary schools in 2025/26.

1.15 **Free school meals eligibility**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.15.1 The budget supports the administration cost of carrying out free school meal eligibility assessments and is provided by the council's Welfare & Benefits Service. The service is provided to all Leeds schools and charges are made separately to academies for the service where they choose to use it.

Proposed budget

- 1.15.2 It is proposed that the funding for FSM eligibility checks would be de-delegated as £1.93 per pupil plus £4.49 per pupil in receipt of FSM in the past six years. This mechanism reflects the additional volume of work for schools with higher measures of deprivation.
- 1.15.3 Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of £178,000. The individual rates per pupil have increased; for 2024/25 the rates were £1.80 per pupil and £4.18 per pupil in receipt of FSM in the past six years.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.15.4 If de-delegation does not continue, then each school would need to make arrangements to administer its own free school meals service. The Leeds Welfare & Benefits Service would continue to provide a traded service that assesses entitlement to FSM and assuming all schools continue to buy into the service would charge the above rates plus any additional costs created by the administration of charging individual schools. If all schools do not buy into the service, then the rates charged above may need to increase.

Consultation responses

- 1.15.5 Of the 58 responses received, 51 (88%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.15.6 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

1.16 **Behaviour support services**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.16.1 This budget is for the Inclusion Support Team which provides support to schools for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs. Work is undertaken to develop capacity within schools supporting key staff to identify and meet needs as part of a graduated approach for children and young people with SEND. The team

provide advice to settings and, where appropriate, may provide assessments, recommendations, and training to build capacity and support needs.

- 1.16.2 The Inclusion Support Team is part of the SEND Inclusion Service based within Learning Inclusion. Aligned with the Educational Psychology SENIT and STARS teams to ensure consistent high quality SEMH practice, the Inclusion Support Team work with children and young people with complexities of SEMH need identified by school and settings, and often include other aspects of vulnerability such as extended non attendance, at risk of exclusion, care experienced.

Proposed budget

- 1.16.3 It is proposed that this funding would be de-delegated at £1.12 per pupil plus £3.47 per pupil in receipt of FSM in the past six years. This reflects the additional need at schools with higher measures of deprivation. Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of £116,000 for 2025/26, which is an increase of £3,700 from 2024/25.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.16.4 If de-delegation does not continue, then there would be no centrally retained budget for behaviour support unless the service operates under a traded basis. The difficulty in operating under a traded basis would be the fact that the budget would be delegated to all schools but as the service provided is targeted, the charging levels and income collection would be difficult to calculate and predict. The ability to operate the service under an SLA could not therefore be guaranteed.

Consultation responses

- 1.16.5 Of the 58 responses received, 38 (66%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.16.6 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

1.17 Support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners

Purpose of the budget

- 1.17.1 This budget makes provision for staff who build capacity within schools to improve the educational outcomes for vulnerable New Arrivals (NA), Ethnically Diverse (ED) pupils as well as those for whom English is an additional language (EAL), in order to narrow the attainment gap.
- 1.17.2 They provide support and challenge to school leadership; specialist advice and guidance on EAL and race and culture related issues at a school level and within the

LA on actions that impact on schools, culturally cohesive teaching and learning strategies, EAL assessment and induction, New to Schooling learners, Anti-racist schooling, decolonised curriculum development support and materials for Ethnically Diverse and EAL pupils; consultancy support to individual schools or localities and bespoke programmes such as Arooj, in order to meet specific identified New Arrival, BAME and EAL needs..

- 1.17.3 A review of the formula used to determine de-delegation of this funding has been undertaken to ensure that the service is funded in a fair manner that reflects the universal offer available.

Proposed budget

- 1.17.4 The total budget proposed for 2025/26 is £300,039, which is an increase of £10k from 2024/25. It is proposed that funding will be de-delegated at a rate of £1.21 per pupil and £32.37 per English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupil for primary schools and £1.82 per pupil and £86.93 per EAL pupil for secondary schools.

Consequences if de-delegation does not continue

- 1.17.5 If not delegated, then there would be no centrally retained budget to support narrowing the attainment gap for NA, BME, cultural diversity and EAL pupils across the city. This service would be difficult to operate as traded service and so should funds not be de-delegated, the consequence is the likely cessation of the service.

Consultation responses

- 1.17.6 Of the 58 responses received, 30 (52%) were in favour of continuing to de-delegate this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.17.7 During the last year, this service has been under review. This review will continue into the next financial year. As part of this review, further possible changes in this budget have been identified that link with the Local Authorities current financial challenge opportunities. It is anticipated that these changes, if realised, could result in a potential reduction in the overall cost of the service to schools. These changes are not confirmed and so have not been included in the budget consultation at this stage.
- 1.17.8 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that the budget for support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners should continue to be de-delegated.

1.18 **School Improvement**

Purpose of the budget

- 1.18.1 The Local Authority previously received a School Improvement and Brokerage Grant (SIBG) to enable it to undertake its statutory and core support, monitoring and intervention duties to maintained schools, as well as to broker additional support to schools requiring additional support. The grant supported the work of the Learning Improvement to undertake these roles.
- 1.18.2 With the removal of the grant in 2023/24, Schools Forum approved the de-delegation of the equivalent full grant cost that the Local Authority would no longer receive.
- 1.18.3 The SI allocation is used centrally for maintained schools. It:
- Provides support to school leaders through the Headteacher Support Service
 - Funds a core School Improvement Adviser support offer to all maintained schools
 - Funds a school improvement adviser offer to Governing Bodies during Headteacher recruitment
 - Provides additional time from School Improvement Advisers to support schools during an OfSTED inspection
 - Enables officers to undertake risk analysis of schools, providing support and intervention as appropriate
 - Provides an enhanced school improvement adviser offer to schools judged as requiring improvement at no cost to the school
 - Provides a school improvement adviser to support the Governing Body of a vulnerable school as part of additional joint improvement committees
 - Provides an additional offer of school improvement adviser and/or Learning Improvement officer (e.g. Head of Service) where schools have significant issues to manage i.e. Inadequate Ofsted judgements, financial difficulties, safeguarding issues, complaint/grievance issues etc
 - Provides the co-ordination and facilitation of Team Around the School meetings for vulnerable schools
 - Provides additional senior improvement adviser support to manage and co-ordinate the work of the school improvement team and provide additional support in more challenging situations
 - Provides Learning Improvement Officer support (e.g. via Head of Service) to co-ordinate the work of other services and external bodies working with maintained schools e.g. Safeguarding, HR, complaints, Governance support, Learning teams, CPD teams, finance, data teams, audit, DfE, RSC, OfSTED, Trade Unions etc.
 - Provides officer time to co-ordinate the relationship between the LA and maintained schools e.g. Headteacher Forums, briefings, communications etc.
 - Provides financial support to schools and/or brokers support to schools that require additional improvement support from external sources and/or from other schools
 - Provides line management of teams undertaking statutory services, such as assessment and moderation

Proposed budget

- 1.18.4 The total budget proposed for 2025/26 is £860k.
- 1.18.5 It is proposed that the funding would be de-delegated as an amount per pupil of £14.90 per pupil; this is an increase of £1.04 per pupil from 2024/25.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

- 1.18.6 Without de-delegation there will be a very significant reduction, and potential removal, of the Learning Improvement services as described above that are currently available to all maintained schools.
- 1.18.7 Schools and Governing Bodies would need to take the action necessary to source and fund external support required for school improvement activity, including Headteacher recruitment, Headteacher support and managing complex improvement situations in school.

Consultation responses

- 1.18.8 Of the 58 responses received, 44 (76%) were in favour of de-delegating this funding.

Recommendation

- 1.18.9 As the majority of schools supported the proposal it is recommended that funding for this service continues to be de-delegated in 2025/26.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Schools Forum members representing maintained primary and secondary schools only are requested to vote (by phase) on the de-delegation of funding for each of the services above in 2025/26. It is recommended that all nine services be de-delegated.
- 2.2 The services to be voted on are shown in the table below, along with the number and percentage of schools that voted in support of de-delegation continuing.

Service area	Schools in support of de-delegation continuing					
	Primary		Secondary		Total	
School contingency fund	47	89%	5	100%	52	90%
Maternity and other cover	49	92%	5	100%	54	93%
Suspended staff cover	32	60%	3	60%	35	60%
Trades union facilities	33	62%	3	60%	36	62%

School library services (primary only)	35	66%			35	66% (of Primary schools)
Free school meals eligibility	47	89%	4	80%	51	88%
Behaviour support services	36	68%	4	60%	38	66%
Support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners	27	51%	3	60%	30	52%
School Improvement	42	77%	3	60%	44	76%