

Leeds City Council

Consultation on the De-Delegation of Funding for Services for the 2025-26 Financial Year

MAINTAINED MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS ONLY

1. Introduction

Funding provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) must be delegated to schools each year by the local authority. Schools Forum can however agree that the local authority retains some of this funding to provide services for maintained mainstream schools. This is known as 'de-delegation' of funding.

Before seeking approval from Schools Forum, the local authority must consult with all maintained mainstream schools to obtain their views on whether funding should continue to be de-delegated for these services in 2025/26. Primary and secondary maintained mainstream schools are therefore requested to complete the online consultation response form by the end of **7th January 2025** in order to inform the vote to be taken by Schools Forum at their meeting on 16th January 2025.

<https://surveys.leeds.gov.uk/s/AS8OZP/>

Please direct any queries by email to SchoolFunding@leeds.gov.uk

This consultation is for maintained mainstream schools only as the ESFA regulations do not allow other settings, such as academies or SILCs, to de-delegate their funding in this way.

The figures quoted below are draft and are based on October 2023 pupil data, adjusted for expected academy conversions. The actual figures de-delegated for 2025/26 will be updated to reflect the actual October 2024 pupil data once this information is available.

All of the services listed below have been de-delegated since 2013/14 when de-delegation was first introduced, with the exception of the Schools Urgent Improvement Fund which was included within the Schools Contingency Fund in 2019/20 and the School Improvement service, which was a new proposal in 2022/23.

2. Estimated de-delegated budget requirements

The initial estimated amount of funding required for de-delegated services in 2025/26 is £5.550m. This is an increase of £389k compared to 2024/25 proposals which totalled £5.161m.

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.

3. De-delegated Services

In the following section each de-delegated service is described, and the proposed budget and per-pupil rates explained. The consequences of not de-delegating are also described to assist with decision making.

School Contingency Fund

Purpose of the budget

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;
- b. Schools in financial difficulties;
- c. Additional costs relating to new, reorganised or closing schools; and
- d. Establishing a schools urgent improvement fund that schools can apply to if they require additional support from local authority services for urgent school improvement priorities.

The budget can be considered as one to pool risk, providing a safety net for schools.

An amount of £50,000 would be ringfenced for the Urgent School Improvement Fund and applications to this fund would be prioritised taking into account the level of need and the ability of the school to meet the costs through their existing budget, with consideration given in particular to the following scenarios:

- Schools in difficulty that require additional support, for example where a new Headteacher takes up post and identifies urgent issues that require additional support in resolving.
- Support to schools with resolving more complex whistleblowing allegations, investigations, or grievances.
- Proactive support for schools that have previously received an Outstanding or Good judgement from Ofsted but are now considered vulnerable.
- Costs incurred beyond those usually expected in supporting the Headteacher recruitment process due to school improvement issues.

Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that the funding would be de-delegated as an amount per pupil of **£4.33**.

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.

This has increased by £0.17 in comparison to 2024/25 (£4.16 pp).

It is proposed that the overall contingency budget is reduced to £500k for 2025/26, this is to reflect previous years underspend trends against this budget. These figures include an additional £250k to the contingency budget from the de delegated reserve 2024/25, ensuring an overall budget remains of **£500,000** in 2025/26. In the event that the de delegated reserves are no longer available the impact would be an increase of 108.3% per pupil from £4.16 in 24/25 to £8.66 in 25/26.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

If the funding remains delegated to schools, 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 or traded offer.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the budget for the School Contingency Fund should continue to be de-delegated and a central contingency fund retained for primary and secondary maintained schools.

Maternity and other cover

Purpose of the budget

The 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.

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 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.

.Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that this funding would be de-delegated based on an amount per pupil and an amount per pupil in receipt of FSM in the last six years, to reflect the additional staff numbers at schools with higher measures of deprivation, as follows:

2025/26 proposals for consultation

| Phase | Per Pupil (Yr R to 11) | Per FSM (ever 6) |
|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Primary | £43.66 | £26.02 |
| Secondary | £46.45 | £27.84 |

Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of **£2,950,000**. This is a £246k (9.1%) increase in funding compared to 2024/25. The increase in the total de-delegated funding is due to the additional costs of maternity leave payments.

2024/25 figures for comparison

| Phase | Per Pupil (Yr R to 11) | Per FSM (ever 6) |
|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Primary | £38.59 | £23.01 |
| Secondary | £41.07 | £24.61 |

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

If the funding remains delegated, 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.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the maternity and other cover budget should continue to be de-delegated and that funding should be retained centrally to meet costs in maintained primary and secondary schools.

Suspended staff cover

Purpose of the budget

This budget provides support for schools where employees are suspended, after the first three months. Whilst this is very rare, 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.

Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that this funding would be de-delegated based on an amount per pupil of **£2.60**. In 2025/26 the de-delegated budget required has increased from a per pupil contribution of £1.67 in 2024/25.

Based on forecast pupil data and expected academy conversions this would provide central de-delegated funding of **£150,000** in 2025/26, an increase of £50k compared to 2024/25.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

If the service remains delegated 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.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Suspended staff cover budget should continue to be de-delegated.

Trade Union Facilities

Purpose of the budget

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 time to undertake city-wide Trade Union duties. This includes support on casework and consultation and negotiation on changes to terms and conditions.

This agreement requires that all unions work towards realigning their convenor levels to ensure that convenor allocation across both schools and Leeds City Council reflects the membership in both areas and that school convenor time is maintained at the agreed levels of support. Historically, in addition to those convenors employed in schools, LCC directorate-based convenors also provide convenor support to schools. This agreement also incorporates a mechanism which provides for in year reductions in funding as a result of academy conversions.

A prerequisite of the involvement of all parties will be a commitment to ensuring positive and constructive support based on behaviours centred on transparency, integrity and a genuine commitment to resolve issues. Leeds City Council believes that this agreement provides an effective partnership approach to city-wide Trade Union Facilities.

Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that this funding would be de-delegated in 2025/26 based on an amount per pupil of **£6.64** which is an increase in the per pupil rate compared to 2024/25 (£6.17). Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of **£383,000** which is an increase of £13k compared to 2024/25.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

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.

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.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the budget for Trade Union Facilities should continue to be de-delegated.

School Library Service (primary only)

Purpose of the budget

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

Part of Leeds' public library service, SLS is a vibrant and pro-active specialist provider of the most up to date books for primary schools, providing schools with newly published children's factual topic books to support classroom teaching; fiction books to support reading for pleasure; and professional support to schools through an annual advisory visit, helping to develop school libraries through support for design, stock acquisition and editing.

In addition, SLS organises a range of reading for pleasure and cultural events for all pupils, engaging both reluctant and high achieving readers through both the Leeds Book Awards, and offering schools the opportunity to take part in Meet the Author events, embedding a reading for pleasure culture across schools.

Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that the funding would be de-delegated for primary schools as an amount per pupil of **£8.26** which is an increase in the per pupil rate compared to 2024/25 (£7.17). Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of **£363,000**.

This is an increase of £30k in total funding compared to 2024/25 (£333,000).

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

If delegated, primary schools would have to meet School Library Service costs from their delegated budget provided that the service was able to continue by operating on a traded basis.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the School Library Service budget should continue to be de-delegated for primary schools.

Free school meals (FSM) eligibility

Purpose of the budget

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.

Method of de-delegation

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.

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.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

If the budget is delegated to schools, 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.

Schools buying into the service would continue to receive electronic weekly listings of new qualifiers and those pupils who no longer qualify; termly listings of all pupils on the roll who qualify; direct telephone and email enquiry service; assistance to identify potential qualifiers and notifications to parents.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the budget for FSM eligibility checks should continue to be de-delegated.

Behaviour support services

Purpose of the budget

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.

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.

Method of de-delegation

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 £3.7k from 2024/25.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

If funding is delegated to schools, 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.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Behaviour Support budget should continue to be de-delegated.

Support to underperforming minority ethnic groups and bilingual learners

Purpose of the budget

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.

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.

During the last year, this service has been under review. This review will continue into the next financial year.

Following feedback from consultation, the service has taken a more pro-active role in engaging with schools and sharing the offer it provides to them. Evaluation of budget use has enabled the service to provide an additional EAL consultant post to support maintained schools.

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. The new funding method is being consulted on for 2025/26.

As part of the 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.

Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that the budget for support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners should be de-delegated as an amount per pupil with EAL and an amount per pupil AWPU.

25/26 proposals for consultation

| Phase | Per Pupil (Yr R to 11) | Per EAL 3 Pupil |
|-----------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Primary | £1.21 | £32.37 |
| Secondary | £1.82 | £86.93 |

Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of **£300,039** for 2025/26 which is an increase of £10k from 2024/25. Individual rates can be compared to 2024/25 amounts which are shown below for information.

2024/25 figures for comparison

| Phase | Per EAL 3 Pupil | Per FSM (ever 6) |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------|
| Primary | £32.92 | £1.39 |
| Secondary | £186.57 | £1.48 |

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

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.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the budget for support to underperforming ethnic minority groups and bilingual learners should continue to be de-delegated.

School Improvement

Purpose of the budget

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.

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.

The SI allocation is used centrally for maintained schools. It:

- a. Provides support to school leaders through the Headteacher Support Service
- b. Funds a core School Improvement Adviser support offer to all maintained schools
- c. Funds a school improvement adviser offer to Governing Bodies during Headteacher recruitment
- d. Provides additional time from School Improvement Advisers to support schools during an OfSTED inspection
- e. Enables officers to undertake risk analysis of schools, providing support and intervention as appropriate
- f. Provides an enhanced school improvement adviser offer to schools judged as requiring improvement at no cost to the school

- g. Provides a school improvement adviser to support the Governing Body of a vulnerable school as part of additional joint improvement committees
- h. 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
- i. Provides the co-ordination and facilitation of Team Around the School meetings for vulnerable schools
- j. 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
- k. 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.
- l. Provides officer time to co-ordinate the relationship between the LA and maintained schools e.g. Headteacher Forums, briefings, communications etc.
- m. Provides financial support to schools and/or brokers support to schools that require additional improvement support from external sources and/or from other schools
- n. Provides line management of teams undertaking statutory services, such as assessment and moderation

Method of de-delegation

It is proposed that the funding would be de-delegated as an amount per pupil of **£14.90** which is an increase of 7.5% from **£13.86** in 2024/25. Based on forecast pupil data this would provide central de-delegated funding of **£860,000** for 2025/26 which is an increase of £29k from 2024/25.

Consequence if the budget is not de-delegated

Without de-delegation, there will be a very significant reduction, and likely removal, of Learning Improvement services as described above that are currently available to maintained schools.

Schools and Governing Bodies would need to take the action necessary to source and fund external support required for school improvement activity (described above), including Headteacher recruitment, Headteacher support and managing complex improvement situations in school.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the School Improvement Fund budget should continue to be de-delegated.

4. Consultation responses

Primary and secondary maintained mainstream schools are requested to consider the de-delegation of each of the above services for the 2025/26 financial year and to complete the online consultation response form by **7th January 2025**. Appendix 1 shows the illustrative school by school allocations for the above services. The views of schools will be reported to Schools Forum on 16th January 2025 to inform their decision on de-delegation for 2025/26.